













PLAIN SERMONS,

BY

Rev. J. Keble
CONTRIBUTORS

TO THE

“TRACTS FOR THE TIMES.”

“We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

“For we are glad when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.”—2 Cor. xiii. 8, 9.

VOL. VI.

LONDON:

FRANCIS & JOHN RIVINGTON,
ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD, & WATERLOO PLACE.

1844.

LONDON :
GILBERT & RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.

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SERMON CLXV.

THE ETERNAL NEW YEAR.

2 ST. PETER iii. 14, 15.

“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of HIM in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the longsuffering of our LORD is salvation.”

WHAT are the things which the Apostle says we all are of course looking for? The fearful circumstances which are to come upon us at the end of all things, the great Day of the LORD, such as they had been described a few verses before: that as “the old world” in the time of Noah, “being overflowed with water, perished,” so “the Heavens and the earth which are now, are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men:” and that “the Day of the LORD will come as a thief in the night; in the which the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up:” finally, that to us there will be, according to our LORD’s promise, “new Heavens and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” “These,” says the Apostle, “are the things which we look for:” we know very well that matters have not always gone on as they do, nor will hereafter always continue to do so; we know that all things, while we live, are perpetually changing round us, or seeming to change; and that we must each of us, before long, undergo that greatest change, Death.

There is not one of us who is ignorant of these things; we have been bred up in the expectation of them; they are quite

familiar to us. Indeed, they are but too familiar : for because we have been told of them so often, and seen so much of them, we are apt some of us to slight even God's own instructions concerning these things ; we imagine it may be very well for unlearned people to be so warned over and over, but as for ourselves, we do not think we need it ; we seem to know it all very well already.

And yet all the while, even when we are saying the words of our faith, we can hardly be said really to know and believe it ; to do that, we must first be sincerely practising it, or, at least, sincerely desiring to do so. We talk about the end of all things ; but what is it more than talk, if we set our hearts upon money, or any enjoyment of this world, as though it would last for ever ? Men speak, as knowing that the Heavens and the earth which now are will perish very suddenly, without any notice thereof ; they are so well aware of this, that they very soon made it into a proverb : the Day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night. We say this and many more such things ; but do we really believe them ? If we did, could we possibly be contented to do any thing displeasing to HIM, Who may come into sight the next moment ? and woe is unto us, if HE find us with the stain of our evil deeds unrepented of !

Here we are come, by His especial mercy, to the end of another year. While many of our brethren and acquaintance, of whom we cannot say that they were in God's sight worse and unworthier than ourselves, have been taken away, and their time of trial shortened, HE has still continued to us the time of repentance and amendment. We are not yet lying on the bed of sickness, our hearts struck down and bewildered with pain and fear, with the burden of the sins of many years, like a dead weight, upon our souls, wishing perhaps to repent, but not knowing how. We are not yet in this sad condition, but who knows how soon we may be ? Any one who shall slight the warnings which God's good Providence may visit him with this very day, this very hour, in this very Church,—who knows how soon he may be struck down, lying helpless upon his bed, tossing about with pain and anguish, unable to think or wish distinctly at all, or wishing in vain for this hour, for one hour of health again, that he may repent and turn to God effectually ?

We cannot, indeed we cannot, my brethren, know ourselves, how sinful and careless we have been, without examining ourselves much oftener and in a far more searching way, than we are most of us used to practise.

For an instance of what I mean, let us now ask ourselves, as in the Presence of HIM Whom we cannot deceive, How many times, in the year which is just over, have we seriously had in our thoughts the Great Day, which we all profess to look for?

We know how it startles us, if we suddenly wake up in the night, and fancy we hear any one in the house. How often have we pictured to ourselves the unspeakable fear and amaze of that last midnight, when HE will come as a thief, without warning, without chance of escape, without possibility of our putting HIM off any longer?

We know what a very powerful and fearful thing, in the way of GOD's judgments, Fire is, and what care we are obliged to take daily, lest fearful and sad accidents befall us through it: how many days, in this last year, have we represented to ourselves that final Fire, when the world will burn under our feet; our treasures, our hopes, our delights, our wonders, all sinking one after another in the flame that will burn up all; and we ourselves after them, except we have taken warning in time! We are on the edge of this Fire; it may break out any moment under us and around us: how many times have we remembered it this last year? how many sins has the remembrance of it kept us from? how many thoughts has it caused us to have of the vanity of this present world, and the danger of setting our hearts upon it?

Too often, it may be, when such thoughts have arisen, in this or in former years, we have quieted them for the time with some blind notion, that as the world has lasted so long, no doubt it will last some time longer; that as GOD has still continued to us and other sinners life and opportunity of repentance, so we may expect HIM to go on sparing us still longer. This is the very deceit of the Evil One: GOD forbid we should ever fall into it. It is, in fact, the first beginning of such unbelieving talk as St. Peter describes, where he says, there would be "mockers in the last times, walking after their own ungodly lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the crea-

tion." So, in our wicked and careless moods, we say to ourselves, Where are the threatenings of His anger? it has not yet come upon us, and we will sin on yet a while, in hopes that we shall live to repent, or that HE will be more merciful than His Word says, or that in some other way punishment will not overtake us.

May ALMIGHTY GOD teach us His fear, that we may give up for ever all such profane thoughts, and sincerely consider that GOD cannot lie: HE is not "slack concerning His Promise, as some men count slackness;" HE does not, as certain weak sinners imagine, grow slack and careless concerning His Word spoken, as if HE forgot it, and had ceased to care whether we attended to it or no: but "HE is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." HE waits long, as the Angel waited with his sword drawn in his hand and stretched out over Jerusalem, to see if men will humble themselves, and turn from their evil ways, accepting patiently the punishment of their iniquity. It is not that either HE or His dreadful judgments are far off, but as HE fills Heaven and Earth, and is always quite close to us, though entirely out of our sight; so the fire of His wrath, the sea of flames which shall consume the world one day, is every day ready to break out, every day close at hand, only kept back by HIM in His Mercy, until our day be quite over and His day begin.

Of all things let us beware, that we abuse not this His long-suffering, and make it an occasion of going on in sin. Nothing so sure to bring on us an increase of punishment, a manifold scourge hereafter. We may judge of this by what we feel in ourselves. When are people so angry, so sure to punish an offender severely, as when they see that he has been offending in wilful scorn of them, and in mockery of their good nature, which had passed over former offences?

On the other hand, see what a blessing appears, in the midst of these awful threatenings, for such as are wise, and either keep their vows, or repent and amend before it is too late. While the world and all things therein are melting from under the feet of the wicked, "We," says the Apostle, "according to His Promise, look for new Heavens and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." As Noah saw the world in greenness and beauty,

coming out of the confusion and desolation in which the Flood had left it, so faithful Christians shall see a new world come forth, in glory and blessedness unspeakable, after the fires of the last Day; a world where "there will be no more death, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things will be passed away." It will be a world pure, and holy, and undefiled: righteousness will dwell there and true holiness. There will be no more care: among the many children of Adam that shall be there, the effects of Adam's sin will be entirely done away. There will be no more shrinking, no more hiding ourselves from the presence of ALMIGHTY GOD: His Throne and the Throne of His SON will be there, and "His Servants shall serve HIM:" their happiness will be to see His Face, and to know that "His Name is written in their foreheads," that He loves to account them His own, and will do so for ever.

These, my Christian friends and brethren, are the things that St. Peter says we know before; fear and love, life and death, blessing and cursing: first, the wicked world perishing in the fires of the wrath of God, then a righteous and holy and glorious world ensuing, the perfection of that kingdom of Heaven, of which we began to be made partakers in our Baptism. Of these two things, all the great changes, which take place in our sight continually, regarding the things of this lower world, are so many figures, and shadows, and pledges. Especially it seems natural, that the coming of a New Year should put us in mind of these things, and assure us more and more of them.

When we look back on the old year, how completely it is gone for ever, how impossible that the smallest moment of it should return again to all eternity; will not this help us to imagine, what sort of a glance we shall throw back on our whole course in this world, when we are at last come to the other? How strange will it then seem to us, that any thing so utterly short-lived and worthless, should at all have won away our hearts from the things eternal! When we look forward to the New Year, how much there seems for us to think of and provide for; how many hopes, plans, expectations, purposes of doing better in various ways than ever we have yet done:—this is a token from God to us, that He has prepared for us an Eternal New Year, in which none of our hopes will be disappointed, nor our plans come to nought, nor any of our purposes fail of the best fruit.

We look back to the seasons of the last year, we remember the bright days of its spring, the glow and fragrance of its summer, the joyfulness and plenty of its autumn, and we think sadly how all has passed away. Its leaves and its flowers are gone, and its fruit will very soon follow; and this tells us, in a way which we cannot help understanding, of the approaching fate of the very world itself, wherein the most innocent things are so frail and transitory.

But again we look forward: we see the buds prepared on the trees, the seed we know is in the ground, and in many cases it has already begun to show itself: the days are again beginning to lengthen, and we are encouraged a thousand ways to look on to another year, and to imagine how delightful it will be to watch the spring and summer coming again. All these are so many shadows of the calm, sure, unspeakable joy of heart, which CHRIST's true and loyal servants feel, when they look in hope beyond the judgment-day, and picture to themselves the new Heaven and the new Earth: the pure River of the Water of Life, and on either side of it the Tree of Life; green pastures and waters of comfort, not for a time, but for ever.

Or we may look at the Old and the New Year in rather a different way; not so much with respect to the earth and the seasons, as with respect to our own hopes and fortunes, our own decay or success in life. Whoever we are, and whatever our line of life, we probably had some hopes, some notions or purposes in our minds, this time last year, which have now departed for ever, and perhaps by this time we wonder that we ever entertained them. We, it is likely, began the year, dreaming of this or that gain, or pleasure, or work, the attainment of which, we now see, was clearly impossible for us; or, if possible, yet more likely to do us harm than good. This may well set us upon considering, how all our worldly schemes, all our frail human plans, for doing good even and serving GOD, will fail in that Day, unable to abide the fire which will try every man's work. Our human plans will fail, but our Divine plans, the counsels for doing good which we may have pursued with single hearts, and in strict obedience to the LORD and His Church—these, by the mercy of GOD, will endure that flame; they will be as gold, and silver, and precious stones; CHRIST our LORD will wash them in His own Blood, and offer them as a precious gift to His FATHER; and what HE, the

Great High Priest, offers, will surely be dear and acceptable in God's sight.

If we have any plans and hopes (as who has not?) for the year which is now beginning, let us before all things see to it, that they be such as we dare recommend to God in prayer, and seriously beg His blessing upon them: if they will not bear being thought of in His Presence, if they will not bear being mentioned to Him, they must be evil, and had better be put by at once.

However, supposing them to be good and innocent, our having such thoughts in our minds is a kind of perpetual hint from Him who reads our hearts, that He would have us look far onwards, and lay our plans for Eternity. It is His secret whisper, inviting us to lay up treasures, not in Earth, where is corruption and robbery, but "in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, nor do thieves break through nor steal."

Once more: if it sadden and humble us, as well it may, to look back on our vows and good intentions, which seemed last year so fresh and pure, and so soon (too many of them) passed away as in a dream; and if our hearts well-nigh fail us to think, What if, by-and-by, when the world has passed quite away, *all* our vows and good purposes shall have passed as fruitlessly with it? yet have we this great ground of hope and comfort, that God, All-pitying, has yet spared us; that He has not cast us away as we deserved; that we see the beginning of another year; we are again invited to humble ourselves for the sad defects of the years that are past, and to offer to our Crucified Lord, on our knees, our solemn promises, in Church and at home, of true amendment, and strict watchfulness for the future.

Only let us see to it, that our holy vows and promises keep possession of our minds, that we forget them not when temptation comes near. Here, again, we may take a lesson from the outward course of the world, from the changes of the seasons. As yet they vary, and have their rounds: but a time we know will soon come, when those changes will be at an end. "The Sun shall then no more go down, neither shall the Moon withdraw itself:" it shall be "one day, known to the Lord." So let our resolutions, before too often broken, now at length become fixed, our prayers attended to, our rules put in practice, our struggles with temptation courageous. Let us settle it in our hearts, every

morning, to remember all that day that CHRIST is present in our hearts and bodies, and that to indulge evil thoughts is affronting HIM to His Face. Every evening let us particularly examine ourselves, how we have kept this rule. Thus, although we must expect abundance of infirmity, HE will mortify all wilful sin in us. Thus only may our New year be Happy, and our LORD's long-suffering be glorified by our salvation.

SERMON CLXVI.

THE CURE OF WILFULNESS.

DEUT. x. 16.

“Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked.”

It is a thing much to be observed, that many of the outward and visible signs, which God has ordained His people to use in worshipping HIM, have somewhat in them to remind us in some way of suffering, affliction, pain, self-denial, death. Thus Sacrifice, which was the great act of solemn worship among the Patriarchs and Jews, was the slaughter of some innocent animal, and the pouring out of its blood before God. Thus the Holy Communion is the remembrance of our SAVIOUR's death, His violent and bitter death. Thus Baptism, the entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, when performed in that way which the Church in her Prayer Book prefers, is also a memorial of His death and rising again; of His death, by the burial of the Child, just for a moment, under the water; of His Resurrection, by the same Child's being immediately lifted out of the water into the minister's arms. It is a memorial of our LORD's death: and it is also a token, pledge, and mean of a real death which the baptized person does at the same time undergo—an inward death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness; and it is a token of the sort of life to be led hereafter in this world—a life according to that death; as St. Paul said, “I die daily:” a life in which a man has continually to keep himself in order, to deny himself many things which he

would like, and to choose and embrace many things which he naturally dislikes. This is the sort of life of which Holy Baptism is the beginning, and it is signified to us by the very act of baptizing.

But of all Church ceremonies, there is none which so distinctly sets before us our call to suffer, as that which has from the beginning always gone along with Baptism; the signing the newly baptized with the sign of the Cross. The Cross is the very height and depth of all suffering: the very name presently tells us of a Soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death; of sweat like great drops of blood falling down to the ground; of a burden too heavy to be borne; of reproach, scorn, shame, spitting; of scourging and a crown of thorns; of Hands, and Feet, and Side pierced; of crying with a loud voice, and yielding up the Ghost: all this and more, more than man's heart can understand, comes into a Christian's mind when he hears of the Cross. What, then, can we understand by the Cross marked on us from our very childhood, but that we too are to go on in suffering and self-denial? that though our LORD's yoke is easy, and His burden light, to such as are renewed by His Spirit, yet in itself it is very bitter, "full," as the Prophet says, "of gall and travail."

Now such as the baptismal Cross is in the Christian life, such was Circumcision among God's ancient people. It was His mark, made for life, in the very flesh of those who belonged to HIM, setting them apart, in a manner, for suffering and self-denial. It was a foretaste of the Cross; and, as such, our SAVIOUR HIMSELF received it. By permitting HIMSELF as on this day to be brought and placed in the Priests' arms, and His Sacred Flesh to be pierced, and Blood shed,—by the pain which His tender infant Body now suffered,—HE did, as it were, offer unto His FATHER the first-fruits of that full harvest of suffering, which was finally to be gathered in upon the Cross. HE sanctified our lesser sorrows, mortifications, and vexations, as HE was afterwards to sanctify in His agony and passion our more grievous and heart-searching trials: our great disappointments, our shame, want, sickness, and death. Certainly, when we look at His course in this His lower world, beginning with endurance of the sharp circumcising knife, and ending with, *My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?* it does seem strange that we should any of us expect to pass

through life in ease and quietness, or think it hard if we have not our own way in all things. "The Disciple is not above his MASTER, nor the Servant above his LORD. It is enough for the Disciple if he be as his MASTER, and the Servant as his LORD."

Thus, whether we look to our LORD's own example, or to the sacramental ways which HE has ordained, both of old and now, to bring His people near HIM, either way we are taught to count them happy which endure; to consider affliction and trouble as God's seal, set upon those who particularly belong to HIM; and to fear nothing so much as receiving our consolation in this world.

But if this be so, then just in such measure as we are going on prosperously and at ease, have we need to mortify ourselves, and keep our passions in order; that by our own doing, if so please God, we may provide for ourselves something like that due chastening, which our afflicted brethren really have to endure. This, our self-denial, we must practise in little matters: it should accompany us in our every-day walk, as every Jew bore about with him the mark of Circumcision, visibly impressed on his flesh: as every Christian was continually reminding himself, in old time, by the sign of the Cross, Whose he was, and Whom he served. We must not keep our patience and self-command to be exercised only on great and solemn occasions: we must be continually sacrificing our own wills, as opportunity serves, to the will of others: bearing without notice sights and sounds that annoy us; setting about this or that task, when we had far rather be doing something very different; persevering in it often, when we are thoroughly tired of it; keeping company for duty's sake, when it would be a great joy to us to be by ourselves: besides all the trifling untoward accidents of life: bodily pain and weakness long continued, and perplexing us often when it does not amount to illness: losing what we value, missing what we desired: disappointment in other persons, wilfulness, unkindness, ingratitude, folly, in cases where we least expected it. There is no end, in short, of the many little crosses, which, if quietly borne in a Christian way, will, by God's grace, do the work of affliction, and help to tame our proud wills by little and little.

I say, tame our proud wills, because Holy Scripture sets forth this as one of the particular objects for which circumcision was

appointed, that God's people might learn by it, not only to get over what are commonly called the Lusts of the Flesh, but the angry, and envious, and proud feeling also; as the Text seems especially to hint: *Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked.* As if stubbornness, and obstinacy, and, in one word, wilfulness, (for that is the meaning of a stiff neck,) were to be cured by the same kind of discipline as sensual passions, lust, and greediness. We know what power may be gained over these by duly and prudently mortifying the body. Fasting, for example, tends to cure greediness: when people are used now and then to go without anything to eat, it makes them more moderate and less particular in all their refreshments of that sort. If they can go without, much more can they content themselves with less than they would like, or with what is unpalatable to them: much more can they give up something in this and in other trifling matters, for those who are in want or in sickness. In short, it is not hard to understand how the body, which greatly affects the mind, may be tamed and brought into subjection, by a quiet and discreet method of Fasting, accompanied, of course, with Alms and Prayer.

And a little consideration will shew, that the same discipline must do great good to the passions of the soul too. We see that St. Paul reckons among the works of the flesh, not only "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness," but also "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings;" and, in a word, all wilfulness. Any thing, however small, by which the ALMIGHTY uses people not to have their own way, even in respect of bodily comfort, is meant by HIM to keep down all these bad passions, and not our bodily appetites only. For what are all our passions, left to themselves, but so many wills of our own, set up against or besides the will of God? And if in any one respect we do from the heart acknowledge the goodness and reasonableness of sacrificing our will to His, how can we quite forget that to do so is equally good and reasonable in every other respect? If we abstain from indulging our bodily appetites, for the sake of pleasing God and obtaining His Grace, is there not so far a better chance of our remembering HIM, when we are tempted to indulge discontented, unkind, proud thoughts, wilful tempers of any sort?

I do not of course mean that this benefit follows upon the mere outward exercise of fasting, but only if a person sets about it religiously, in the fear of God, in desire to draw near to CHRIST, and in humble obedience to His will, made known in His Gospel and by His Church. Otherwise mere fasting, as well as mere prayer, or mere reading, or mere going to Church, may be turned into a snare of the Devil. But it is not therefore to be omitted, any more than those other holy exercises; but practised, as I said, in the fear of God: the want of which fear alone it is, which can ever make any person easy in depending on one or other holy duty, so as to leave out the rest.

Therefore, as we keep under the body in order that it may the better serve the soul, so ought we very carefully to keep under the soul itself, watching and restraining within our hearts, and in our behaviour, even in our chance words, gestures and looks, every movement of the proud and wilful spirit: which indeed is the very thing which the Holy Prophet means, in bidding us *circumcise the foreskin of our heart*.

Nor let us rashly imagine, that even when we are directly employed in serving God and doing our duty, we are safe against such wilfulness. Remember, we have a subtle Enemy, who can transform himself into an Angel of light: who persuaded God's own people of old to think, without any manner of question, that when they were killing God's own Apostles, they were doing God service. Certainly, in proportion as we serve God and humbly obey HIM, we have a promise of protection against the snares of of the Evil one: yet as long as we are in this world, we dare not expect to be *quite* safe. We are not safe in reading the Scriptures, we are not safe in Prayer, we are not safe in Almsdeeds, we are not safe in Fasting, we are not safe in Sacraments. In each and in all of these, there is room for the proud will of man to set itself up, against the pure and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Thoughts, for example, such as these, will sometimes come into our minds, in our public and private devotions: "Might not this prayer have been put in better words? might not this service have been wiselier ordered? might not this or that rule of the Church have been more discreetly omitted?" Such thoughts are permitted for our trial, whether at the bottom of all our goodness there be

not some lurking seed of wilfulness : they are intended indeed for all mischief by the Enemy, but God means them to be subdued by us, and so to make our crown (so be it) surer and brighter. What are we to do with them, when they come ?

If they mingle with our devotions, if they interrupt our prayers, we must of course put them down at once, as we would any other worldly disturbance.

If they make us openly disobedient to any rule of the Church, then surely they cannot be quite right : that surely is a case in which the stiff neck, the wilfulness of the natural man, requires to be subjected even by violence, and brought into captivity. We ought to obey God rather than man : God's plain command of humility and obedience, and not giving offence, rather than the scruples and doubts of our own (perhaps) deceitful hearts : God's voice in His Church, with which HE has promised to be, rather than the private opinion or example of this or that good person.

It is the neglect of this caution which has made so many Heresies and Schisms in the Church, so many mistaken and wrong ways of setting about God's work. They come of the carnal heart, the wilful mind : and therefore the Apostle reckons seditions and heresies amongst the works of the Flesh : and they must be put down and guarded against in the same way as other works of the Flesh, by using to deny and distrust ourselves in the very first beginnings of every thing ; no more expecting to have our own way all clear and comfortable in the service of God, than in matters of this world ; and making up our minds to obey, though we may not see all the reasons of the command.

This is good part of what Moses meant, by calling on us to *circumcise the foreskin of our heart*. Whoever will really call himself to account, how he has practised this in the year that is past, and will resolve heartily, in the fear of God, to watch and deny his will and mind, as well as his body, in the year that now begins, he will at least have begun that year well : and if he keep his vow, there are sure promises for him, that he will be nearer God at the end of the year (if he live to see it) than he now is : through HIM who beginning this day from Circumcision, and passing by the way of the Cross, is set down at the right hand of God.

S E R M O N C L X V I I .

THE WISE MEN FOLLOWING THE STAR.

ST. MATTHEW ii. 2.

“ We have seen His Star in the East, and are come to worship HIM.”

IN all the history of our LORD's manifestation on earth, and especially in the account of His childhood, there is a wonderful mixture of openness and reserve. There is a veil over the brightness of His Presence, through which HE allows HIMSELF to be seen occasionally only, and not by all sorts of persons, but by a few only of a particular class and character.

Thus, in His birth, how was the unspeakable dignity of the SON of GOD hidden and clouded over ! His mother, the wife of a poor carpenter of Nazareth ; the chamber, a stable ; the cradle, a manger : yet how wonderful the manifestation of His glory ! Angels coming in brightness from the heavens to announce HIM,—a thing which had never been known or thought of before, since, on the birthday of the world itself, “ the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of GOD shouted for joy.”

Again, when HE was circumcised, HE seemed like one among many sinners, having need to be admitted into the LORD's earthly family : but great indeed was the token of His Majesty, in having His Name twice brought by an Angel from heaven, and that the Name JESUS, which declared HIM the SAVIOUR of the world. Then HE was brought to the Temple, in the usual way, with simple offerings, as any poor man's child might be : but HE was received with an outpouring of the HOLY SPIRIT of Pro-

phesy, so many hundred years silent in that place. Still, however, this SPIRIT was vouchsafed only to quiet and meek persons, and His message spoken of to those only who looked for redemption; even as before, His birth was made known to the shepherds only, watchfully doing their duty; and the secret of the name JESUS, brought from heaven, was known, as far as we can tell, only to St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin.

The next event in our LORD's childhood is the Epiphany, or visit of the Wise men, which we commemorate this day. And here, surely, we may plainly perceive the same rule or law to have been kept. On the one hand, how clear and glorious the token from heaven! a new and wonderful star, appearing so far away, and inviting even Gentiles to so great a distance, not merely to see, but even to worship HIM: on the other hand, when HE is found, HE is a meek and lowly babe, resting on His Mother's knees, as any other child might do, in a poor cottage of a humble village. And the immediate consequence of their visit is, that HE is forced to fly for His life; or rather His Mother and Joseph are forced to remove HIM by night, as if HE were helpless, like all infants, and could do nothing for HIMSELF. They worship HIM, owning His Godhead: HE flies, confessing HIMSELF a true child of man, as we are.

Thus the Epiphany, like the other manifestations of our LORD, partly veils and partly discloses His glory.

As in those other instances also, the disclosure is made to persons of a certain character, and to those only. It is not hard to see what sort of mind these Wise men were in; how earnest, not only in obtaining what heavenly knowledge they could, but also in obeying what they knew. They lived in a country, and most likely belonged to a profession, in which the observation of the stars was great part of their daily business. And as the shepherds, when the Angel was sent to them, were watching over their flocks by night, that is, in the honest exercise of their daily calling; so this star was ordered to meet the eyes of these men, so learned in the signs of the heavens. It seems in both cases to signify, that God loves to visit, with His heavenly and spiritual blessings, those whom HE sees diligent and conscientious in their daily duty.

Now the star was of course something extraordinary, some-

thing different from other stars, as indeed the whole course of this history shows it to have been. There can be little doubt that it was a glory, a miraculous appearance, sent from heaven for this very purpose. And it might be, the wise men had heard or read of that old prophecy, which mentions that a star should one day rise out of Jacob¹. For Balaam, who uttered that prophecy fourteen hundred years before, was himself one of the Wise men of the East, and his words might be known and remembered, especially as Moses had set them down.

However, either by that prophecy, or in some other way, God had made known to these Wise men, when they saw the star in the East, that it was a token of the birth of One who should be King of the Jews, and they set out at once on their long journey to worship HIM. The length of the way did not keep them back, nor yet their having to go to Jerusalem, which was at that time thought little of among all the nations of the world. They were of a sort of persons renowned for their wisdom, yet they were not ashamed to ask for guidance of those who were least esteemed in the world, because they knew they were the people of God.

And God encouraged them : they found the place which they sought. Herod, and the chief Priests and Scribes, enemies of our LORD, and designing to slay HIM, told them, however, where to find HIM, and directed them to the old prophecy concerning Bethlehem. This was great encouragement : to find that the Scriptures of God, as interpreted by those whom GOD HIMSELF had made guardians and expounders of them, guided them onward, instead of checking and disappointing them. And it was still greater, even miraculous encouragement, when immediately on their setting out for Bethlehem, the star which they had seen in the East appeared again : and now it disappeared no more, till it "came and stood over where the Young Child was," marking out the very cottage in which the HOLY SAVIOUR might be found.

Thus they could have no doubt : they were quite sure it was HE whom they sought. They were as certain as the shepherds, when they had come there, obedient to the voice of the Angel. It moved them not at all that they saw but a little Child, resting on the bosom of a poor Maiden, with an aged man waiting by.

¹ Numbers xxiv. 17.

Their faith had brought them so far, under direction of their heavenly Guide, and they were not now going to swerve from it, and begin indulging unbelieving thoughts. They fall down at once, and worship the Young Child, and offer HIM the very best that they have to give, the treasures and gifts which they had brought with them on purpose, "gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."

Having thus done, the Wise men receive another warning from GOD in a dream, which way they should go home; a favour which shewed that HE was graciously pleased to accept all they had done hitherto. And having come home, they lost not their faith, but, as ancient tradition relates², were ready to receive the preaching of the Gospel from St. Thomas, when he came into that country, some years after the Ascension of our LORD. These Wise men assisted that Apostle in bearing witness to the Cross among their own countrymen in the East.

Such were the persons who were honoured by our LORD to be the second set of chosen witnesses, invited by miraculous guidance to see HIM in His childhood. Are we not, so far, all of us like them, in that, when children, we too have a sort of Star in the East, to guide us towards the cradle of our LORD? We are carried to Church, we are taught to pray, we learn more or less of Scripture words and histories: GOD gives us notice, in various ways, of that wonderful Child, who was born at Bethlehem to be King of the Jews: various things happen, from time to time, which give us a sort of blind indistinct feeling, that there is within our reach, we know not how near us, a great and heavenly Being, could we but feel after HIM and find HIM.

Now these notices and feelings, if they are indeed sent by the MOST HIGH, as the star was sent to the wise men, will guide us, more or less directly, to Jerusalem, that is to the Holy Church of GOD, the city set on an hill which cannot be hid. We indeed are in that Church already, by the ALMIGHTY'S especial favour, ever since the moment of our Baptism. And still as we search after the truth, our thoughts are brought back to the same Church; and Providence teaches us, as the star guided the Wise men, to go to Jerusalem, the Church and city of GOD, and ask where the Truth, that is CHRIST, is to be found.

² St. Chrysostom, Hom. vi. on St. Matt. § 5. Oxf. Translation.

And the Church, like a gracious mother, will be ready at our need. She will guide us, as herself is guided, by Holy Scripture. She will send us to Bethlehem, because it is so written in the Prophets: Bethlehem, which is, being interpreted, the House of Bread, and which therefore is an apt figure of the place where HE gives HIMSELF to us, who is "the true Bread which cometh down from heaven, the Bread of GOD which giveth life unto the world." The Church, in short, being guided by the Scriptures, will send us to the Holy Communion, there to worship and receive JESUS CHRIST. What have we to do in this world, but to prepare ourselves, and follow that heavenly guidance? And we are so far rightly preparing ourselves, as we really from our heart are endeavouring to copy the Wise men in their search for the new-born SAVIOUR.

The Wise men were ready to follow wherever GOD's providence might lead them, however slight and even doubtful the notices of His will might be. They follow the star, not knowing whither it would take them, much as Abraham had done, from nearly the same country, two thousand years before. So ought it to be enough for us to know the next step in our journey, the next thing GOD would have us do, with something like tolerable certainty. One step before them, is as much as sinners in a troublous world should expect to see.

The Wise men did not mind the trouble of their journey to find our LORD. Day after day they went on, and still the star, as it may appear, or at least some providential sign, shewed them they had still further to go; and they did not grow weary, nor turn back, nor say, "Why could not we as well have honoured the Young Child at a distance, in the sight of GOD, who knows our hearts?"

This surely may reprove our indolence and want of faith, who are so seldom willing to leave our homes, and go ever so little way, there, where we are sure the Young Child is to be found but rather put up with idle excuses, the more profane because they make a show of respect, of GOD being in one place as much as in another, and of our being able to serve HIM at home as acceptably as in Church.

Neither, again, did those Wise men shrink from their long journey, nor fear to ask about our LORD, or to go where they

heard HE was, or to worship when they had found HIM, lest they should be wondered at, and thought strange, and pointed to as wilfully and fancifully making themselves unlike other people. No such thought, it would appear, came at all into their minds : they just followed the star and the Prophet, whether those who looked on derided them or no. Will it not be a good token of our faith, when we too make up our minds to obey the Church, and serve GOD as we best may, not regarding what kind of talk people may at first make about it ?

I say, *at first*, because in no long time, if we let them alone, they will let us alone. It is but exercising a little courage and perseverance at first, and taking care not to disgrace our profession by wilful sin ; and we shall quickly find leave from the world to serve God regularly in spite of her scorn.

Further, the Wise men were not ashamed to acknowledge and honour CHRIST as especially present in a poor cottage, and as a Young Child : neither let us doubt, but take HIM at His word when HE says, “ Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto ME ;” and again, “ Whosoever shall receive one such little child in My Name, receiveth ME.” As ever we desire to find CHRIST truly in His Sacraments and His Scriptures, be it our care never to forget HIM in His poor, if we can relieve them ; or in His little ones, if we can help them to continue His, at least by not doing or saying any thing to corrupt them in the way of bad example.

The Wise men, being bidden by an Angel not to return to Herod, obeyed, and went back as they might some other way. They did not stumble at the command, though it might seem strange to find so sacred a Person in danger, and His life made to depend on any thing they could do. They did not say, “ How is this ? that HE should be the SON of GOD, and yet we must go out of our way to save His life from the tyrant ?” But being bidden, at once, without objection, they obey the bidding. It will be a good sign when Christian persons, having found truth, shew themselves worthy of it, by the like obedience to plain commands, without asking questions.

Lastly, the Wise men grudged not the Holy Child the best and most expensive gifts they could offer, though it were hard to see how some of them, at least, could be of any use to HIM. But

they were full of adoring love, and a heart where love dwells cannot stop to consider the use of things. Does not this tell us something about our way of serving and honouring CHRIST in His Churches, and in all that appertains to them, especially in whatever belongs to the services of the Holy Communion? Ought it not to be all as handsome as we can make it? Ought we nicely to count the cost, or measure the good done, when we are bringing our offerings for such purposes? Are we used to do so, when we are bringing tokens of affection to those whom we most love and honour on earth? Did David so behave? or St. Mary Magdalene? or these Wise men? or any of those whom the Bible mentions as honouring God and being honoured by HIM?

For indeed these Wise men were greatly honoured by HIM; especially if, as was of old believed, they became afterwards disciples of His Apostle, ministers and stewards of His mysteries. Think what a glorious ending, from a beginning in appearance so slight and seemingly accidental, as their observing a particular star, religiously taking it to be from God, and with all perseverance inquiring its import, and following after its course.

Let any Christian child, or poor person as ignorant as a child, only go on doing his best in silence, God for His part will most surely keep and perform His part of the promise. Let the star, the lesser light you have, guide you to CHRIST here, that you may after this life have the fruition of His glorious Godhead.

S E R M O N CLXVIII.

APOSTOLICAL SYMPATHY.

PREACHED ON THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

1 COR. ix. 22.

“I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

ST. PAUL's day is, in one respect, different from most of the Saints' Days of the holy Church Universal. We keep not only the anniversary of his Martyrdom, which took place the same day with that of St. Peter, but also that of his Conversion to the faith of CHRIST.

One reason for this, no doubt, is the special appearance of our LORD JESUS CHRIST at his conversion; and, for a like reason, we observe the day of St. John the Baptist's Nativity, not the day of his Martyrdom: taking that point in the history of both Saints, which marks them out most as especial instruments for the glory of our Divine SAVIOUR, and brings HIM, as it were, nearest to them.

Another and a very manifest reason, for this distinction in the case of St. Paul, is the knowledge we have of the particular purpose, for which God raised him up; namely, to be the Apostle of the Gentiles, and to bestow by him on the Church very great and remarkable blessings. It has pleased Providence that his example and character should be much more fully set before us, than that of any other Saint of the New Testament. In

him, more than in any other, we are given to see the Church of God, such as she was intended to be in her conflict with the wicked world. I mean the Church of God *in action*: enduring toils; overcoming difficulties; silencing blasphemies; directing consciences; winning her way against opposers; casting down unholy or proud imaginations; bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of JESUS CHRIST.

For which reason those old writers, who were most likely to know the true meaning of holy Scripture, were of opinion that the tribe of Benjamin, that warlike and active tribe, was intended to be, as among the tribes of Israel, a figure or shadow of St. Paul, and of those who, like him, should be raised up to do great things in the Church, to enlarge her border, and confound her enemies. Benjamin, as Jacob prophesied¹, was to “ravin as a wolf: in the morning” he was “to take the prey, and in the evening to divide the spoil,” or distribute the food. So St. Paul at first was a persecutor, but in his later age had the office of feeding God’s people; among the Gentiles especially.

This, then, was St. Paul’s particular calling: to have the care of all the Churches; to preach CHRIST where HE was not yet named; to win ground from the enemy: to be a man of war in God’s cause; a ruler in His Israel; a governing, directing person, to whom thousands were to look up, and come to ask counsel of him. He had influence far and wide. Accordingly, we find in St. Paul, speaking after the manner of men, the sort of character which the world calls great; firmness, wisdom, courage, self-denial, the power of leading and guiding others, without those faults and corruptions, which are sure to beset such remarkable persons when left to themselves and to the world.

Among other things which particularly fitted him to govern and guide the flock of God, is that which is mentioned in the text;—that he was made all things to all men. This is an expression which might easily be mistaken, and has been so before now: as though St. Paul recommended, by his advice and example, a sort of craft in religious matters,—pretending to agree with men when you really do not, humouring them in bad ways, concurring with them to a certain length in what you know or fear to be wrong;

¹ Gen. xlix. 27.

but all the while for their benefit, and with a view of doing, on the whole, more good in the end. It is easy to see and feel how persons may be tempted to this sort of conduct. For example; what is more common than for Christians, even well-meaning persons, to keep up not merely kindness, but intimate friendships with persons whom they know to be living in fornication, covetousness, idolatry, railing, drunkenness, extortion, or any such thing, concerning which persons St. Paul says, "that with such an one we ought not to eat?" Well, notwithstanding this rule of St. Paul, Christians do often wilfully keep such company; and if you asked them why, they would say that it was with a view to do more good on the whole: they wink at their present sins, and seem to countenance them, in order to get their affection, and bring them to amendment. Are not many marriages made by this rule, or, at least, defended by this excuse? and how do they commonly turn out?

This instance may suffice to show what is meant, when we speak of becoming all things to all men as a bad thing, and warn people against it: and it is an error which holy Scripture notices in some very fearful examples: as in the case of Saul, who first intruded on the priests' office, sacrificing without warrant to do so, lest the people should refuse to stay with him³; and afterwards spared the cattle of Amalek, contrary to the express word of God, because, as he acknowledged, he "feared the people⁴." There is also the case of Aaron, who consented to the making and honouring the golden calf, because, as he said, the people were "set on mischief⁵:" that is, I suppose, there was no knowing how much worse they might behave; they might murder him, and cast off God's worship entirely, if they were not indulged for the time in this one wrong desire of theirs.

A much lighter error, but yet an error of the same kind, was that which St. Paul himself had once to correct in the great Apostle St. Peter, when, rather than give present dissatisfaction to certain Jewish converts which were there, he separated himself from the Gentile Christians⁶, and so encouraged a division in the Church, and encouraged also the low notion, that believers were still under the Law of Moses.

² 1 Cor. v. 11.

³ 1 Sam. xiii. 11.

⁴ Ibid. xv. 24.

⁵ Exod. xxxii. 22.

⁶ Galat. ii. 11.

In all these cases there was a kind of accommodation practised, such as Holy Scripture evidently blames, though sometimes more and sometimes less. But this of St. Paul in the text is very different; it is an example, not a warning. And the difference may be put in one word: it is not accommodation which St. Paul encourages, but sympathy. He does not say that he practised what would please others, to win them, but he says, that he always had an eye to them; he put himself into their place. He thought with himself, Were I a heathen, or a Jew, a young man or an old, an advanced or an imperfect Christian, a rich man or a poor, a master or a servant; what would my thoughts, and feelings, and fancies be, when such and such holy Truths, or divine Commandments, were made known to me? And according to what his wise and charitable heart, guided by the HOLY SPIRIT, told him, of the needs and feelings of other persons, so he ordered his ways towards them, and his manner of speaking to them, and dealing with them. As he says to the Galatians, he was accustomed to “change his voice⁷,” not always to please and soothe them. Sometimes it was quite the other way: as when he smote Elymas with blindness, calling him “the child of the Devil, the enemy of righteousness⁸.” He knew that such fearful words, and the judgment which accompanied them, “not seeing the sun for a season,” was just what the case of that unhappy person required. And we may remember, St. Paul himself knew well what were the feelings of a person struck blind, and how such a stroke of God’s anger might lead to true repentance. For he himself was blind for three days after his conversion, “and did neither eat nor drink⁹,” and what he went through in that time, no man knows; but we know how he served God afterwards.

Thus much to shew how feeling for all men might make a person severe in some cases, no less than indulgent in others. And hence we may learn what to think of the many cases in St. Paul’s history, where we find him practising a more indulgent kind of discipline. It was not out of mere good nature, as it is called, much less out of any crafty or unworthy policy; but it was just putting himself, in each instance, into the place of the other

⁷ Gal. iv. 20.⁸ Acts xiii. 10.⁹ Ibid. ix. 9.

persons concerned, and doing as he felt they would wish him to do, if they knew what was for their real good. It was, according to his own rule, "pleasing his neighbour," not for the sake of pleasing him, but "for his good," not in this world, but "to edification¹."

To take the instances which the Apostle himself had been enumerating just before the text: "Unto the Jews," first, "I became," says he, "as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews." How was this? for we know how earnestly St. Paul opposed himself to the Jewish prejudice, that circumcision and keeping the ceremonies of the Law were at all necessary to salvation. How, then, did he become as a Jew to the Jews?

Look at that letter of his, in which he most opposes their ceremonies; look at the Epistle to the Romans, and see how he speaks of them there. "I also am an Israelite." "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart." "I could wish that myself were accursed from CHRIST, for my brethren²." Look in the Acts of the Apostles, and see what trouble he took, how he went out of the way, to show them that he revered the Mosaical ceremonies, and did not hold them wicked, though he would not have them reckoned part of the Christian Law. He circumcised Timothy³, when he might well have had an excuse for not doing it, namely, that his father was a Greek; thus teaching us by example, that in the matter of any religious ceremony, when it is doubtful what to do, it is better to err on the side of too much reverence, than on the contrary side. Again, when he came to Rome, the first thing he did was to send for the elders of the Jews, and explain to them that he was not in prison for any thing "contrary to the religion and customs of their forefathers," neither had "ought to accuse his nation of⁴."

In short, his whole conduct towards his countrymen agreed well with the feeling he expressed, in that vision at Jerusalem, not long after his conversion. When Our LORD appeared to him, and ordered him out of Jerusalem, he clearly felt it a disappointment⁵. He remonstrated, if one may say so, with our SAVIOUR, for leave to go on yet a while in the cause which was so near his heart,—the cause

¹ Rom. xv. 2.

² Rom. ix. 2.

³ Acts xvi. 2.

⁴ Ibid. xxviii. 17.

⁵ Ibid. xxii. 17.

of his own countrymen ; and, if need were, to be martyred among them. " LORD, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on THEE : and when the blood of Thy Martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him." As much as to say, (for surely it seems part of his meaning,) " If I was so wild in my unbelief, surely there is hope for them also ; and O that I might be the person to turn them !"

Thus much for the holy Apostle's especial sympathy with the Jews. As to the Gentiles, them also he mentions just before the text, saying ; " To them which are without law I became as without law, that I might gain them that are without law." That is, he put himself in the place of the Gentiles, and said and did what their condition required ; as when, writing to the Corinthians⁶, he so greatly slighted human wisdom, which he knew they were inclined to think too much of : also as when, speaking to the Athenians, he made use of their own poets, their own altars, their own customs, and the like⁷ ; whereby to bring them to attend to the truth of CHRIST. But towards the people of Derbe and Lystra, who were in the very act of idolizing himself, he spake with all vehemence, as the case required, seeing it was the only thing which could hinder them from offering sacrifice to him⁸. In neither case did he flatter or beguile, or at all encourage them in any thing wrong, no not with a view to greater good hereafter, as we, in our short-sighted self-sufficient plans, are so often tempted to do ; but he used that gift which God gave him, of entering into their minds and feelings, to edify them, whether by soothing or contradiction, as might be needed.

And as it was with him in respect of Jew or Gentile, so also in respect of rich and poor, and the other distinctions of life ; to masters and servants, husbands and wives, in short, to all sorts of people, he speaks as one who had the power, by the Divine Spirit which was in him, to feel not only *with* them but *for* them ; —not only what they would like, but what their condition would most require. " Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a MASTER in Heaven."

⁶ 1 Cor. ii.⁷ Acts xvii.⁸ Acts xiv.

“Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things, not purloining, not answering again: but showing all good fidelity.” Again, to the rich he says; “Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches.” To the poor, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content: I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound.” Of young men he says, “Exhort them to be sober-minded;” of the old, “Let them be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.” So thoroughly had the HOLY GHOST taught him to enter impartially and affectionately into the condition, the mind, and wants of all men.

Now I said, that St. Paul was a representative, what we may in some sense call a Type, of the Church or Kingdom of CHRIST in *action* and *warfare*. His teaching seems especially recorded as the completest standard and model of *her* teaching. May it then be truly said that the Church is made all things to all men? Surely it may: the mystical Body of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, animated by His Spirit, has a word of seasonable instruction, and an aid of seasonable grace, for every one, even the meanest, of His Members. Surely there is no person, rich or poor, young or old, good or bad, wise or foolish, for whom the Church, as she speaks in our Prayer Book, has not a word of comfort or censure, of warning or encouragement, in their season.

But if we desire to see how exactly the Church from the beginning practised this charitable consideration of St. Paul, we need only look to the account of the advice given by the Apostles at Jerusalem to St. Paul himself, when he came there after his ministry among the Gentiles⁹. They told him their judgment was, that in order to satisfy those Jews who had been told that he treated the Law with irreverence, he should join in certain ceremonies, whereby it might be understood, that although he would not have the Law forced on the Gentiles, yet he honoured it as GOD's ordinance, and had no desire to disturb the other Jewish Christians in their conscientious obedience to it.

In a word, the decision of the Church was, that St. Paul should

⁹ Acts xxi.

go as it were out of his way, to convince his brethren in their alarm, that he himself also walked orderly, and kept the Law. So exactly did the whole Church agree in spirit with the great Apostle himself, that one should become "all things to all men, if by any means" one "might save some."

And as this is the temper of St. Paul himself, and of the Church which he served, so also should it be the temper of each particular Christian, among his own friends and acquaintance, and all whom the Providence of God puts in his way. He will account it a part of charity to become all things to all men: to enter into their notions and feelings, not for any vain fancy of pleasing them and obtaining their good word, but for their profit, if haply by God's mercy he may be permitted to do something towards the salvation of a brother. And truly it is a strange power, which God's Holy Spirit gives to faithful self-denying persons, to enter into the thoughts and tempers and passions of those for whom they are concerned, even of those who are most unlike themselves; guarding them by a kind of instinct, against those sins and temptations, which would seem to be furthest from their own feeling and knowledge; as God and good Angels guard them, knowing, and in a manner feeling for the sinner, without any sort of communion in the sin. It ought to be an awful thought to any misled and guilty person, when he perceives, as a little observation most likely will cause him to perceive, that the best and purest souls are aware of the dangerousness of the sins to which his secret heart is inclined,—are aware of it, if not in his case, yet in some others. I say, it is an awful and serious thing, when any of us observe this: it ought to bring home to our minds this conviction, That the high invisible Spirits who are watching around us, and yet more the FATHER of all spirits, both know our secret sins more perfectly, and hate them more entirely, than our good and thoughtful friends either know or hate the worst things, which we perceive them instinctively shuddering at and guarding against.

Thus the presence of a good man, and the seeing him careful to give no occasion of offence, in that very kind, perhaps, to which you know yourself inclined: this is a silent token of the immediate presence and future judgment of the SON of God with His holy Angels. How could God honour a frail earth-born

sinner more, than to make him thus helpful in saving a soul from death?

Once more, very briefly : if it be asked, what is the way by which frail imperfect men may be fitted and enabled to understand the thoughts of the wicked, so as to perceive their tendency, and to pray and strive against them : the answer is, we must be very single in our aims,—not *looking*, much less *turning*, back, after we have once given in our names to JESUS CHRIST, to be His soldiers and servants. Too late, alas ! it is for most of us to think of resembling the Apostle after his Baptism, when, as he tells us, “ he knew nothing of himself ; ”—he was not conscious of any wilful sin, to be a drawback on the completeness of God’s blessing : and so going on with an untroubled and sincere mind, he was better able to discern and understand what his people were each of them really about : God’s SPIRIT was more ready to help him ; and his precautions for his neighbour’s good, like those of good Angels, were more likely to be crowned with success. The secret, in a word, of St. Paul’s discerning of spirits, was his being pure in heart. For of the pure in heart our LORD promises, “ they shall see God,”—see HIM present in all things, enlightening them in all their duty, both to Himself and to their brethren.

For very charity’s sake then, as well as for fear of the dreadful Judgment, let us strive to keep our hearts clean, to root out with abhorrence the first slight growths of bad desire. Else, however goodnatured we may seem to ourselves, and however useful outwardly to others, in the great and eternal charity, that of saving immortal souls, we must not expect to have any part. For when those who are wilfully impure try to help others to Heaven, what is it but the blind leading the blind ? the end of which our LORD has told us. Let us remember the prayer of the Psalmist, humbled to the dust by the sense of his great transgression : “ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. O give me the comfort of thy help again, and stablish me with thy free Spirit. Then ” (and not till then) “ shall I teach Thy ways unto the wicked, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.”

Let us remember also, that even this great Saint had his exercises of voluntary self-denial, his regular fastings and mortifications to go through, in order to keep the Grace given him. “ I keep under my body,” says he ; I punish it, I deal roughly

with it, I bring it into subjection, I train it as I would a stubborn slave; "lest by any means, after I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway⁹."

"If St. Paul speak thus, how much more we!" So exclaims an ancient writer: and so, I suppose, we must all feel. God give us grace to act accordingly!

⁹ 1 Cor. ix. 27.

S E R M O N C L X I X .

CHRIST'S PURIFYING PRESENCE.

PREACHED ON THE PURIFICATION OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN.

MALACHI iii. 2.

“Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when HE appeareth? for HE is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope.”

THESE words, undoubtedly, at first hearing, carry the mind forward to the great and dreadful Day. As we read or hear them, we naturally think of the GOD of all purity, coming down from Heaven with that searching fire, which HE has assured us HE will employ, to try and prove “every man's work, of what sort it is.” We think of our own dread, and anguish, and sinking of spirit, should we be found at that day unprepared,—impure in the sight of HIM, Who, as St. Paul speaks, “is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and Who pierceth even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart:” Whose fires, therefore, have power, not only to waste our living bodies, but to enter into our very souls.

What if we, too, after all that has been done to purge us, should turn out mere dross, unpurified, ungodly, as we were born in the earth, or worse,—how shall we be able to stand that Refiner's fire?

Again; it is said also, that our LORD at His coming shall be like “fullers' sope:” sparing no kind of filthiness; utterly cleansing and whitening all that is washed with it. It is a parable, made homely and familiar on purpose, that we may thoroughly understand it, and very often be put in remembrance of it. It is

intended to set us on thinking, What if we and our doings should be found stains on the white vesture of the Church, spots in our LORD's feast of charity? in such a case we see by this verse how speedy and how final our judgment will be. The LORD will endure us no longer, but will cast us off from HIMSELF, and from His holy Body, the Church, which cannot be taken up to Heaven until it is clean, and cannot be clean while any thing impure, sinful, or disobedient abides in it.

Undoubtedly, therefore, we do well, reading the words of the Prophet in the text, to remember with awe the day, when HE will come to be our Judge: yet those words may be also not ill understood of our SAVIOUR's coming near a man, or near His Church, in any way.

GOD never reveals HIMSELF as closely approaching sinners, without putting them to proof and trial, more or less resembling that by which metals are tried in the fire. This was more especially shown, when HE became Incarnate, and came so very near our sinful nature, as actually to take it upon HIM. The Human Nature in HIM became, as it were by the touch of His Godhead, thoroughly and entirely purged from all dross of sin, of corrupt desire and weakness. From the very birth HE was quite pure, because, though HE was the SON of Mary, HE was also the SON of GOD, and it is impossible for GOD to sin, or have fellowship with sin.

Therefore, even in that day of His humiliation, those who knew or felt HIM to be the SON of GOD, and themselves sinners, trembled before HIM, and would fain have got away from His Presence. They could not "abide the day of His coming;" they could not "stand when HE appeared." The devils cried out, "Let us alone:" "we beseech Thee, torment us not." A whole city, at one time, "besought HIM to depart out of their coasts." St. Peter himself, overpowered by the sense of His Majesty, fell down at His knees, and besought HIM, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O LORD." This was in the devils the fear of direct punishment: not so, I should think, only nor chiefly, in the others. It might rather be their overwhelming awe, at finding the Eye of Purity fixed on them: they were dazzled, as the sight is by the sun, which by its beams seems to enter in, and mingle with the very substance of the eye.

That the Prophet in the text meant this kind of continued Presence, and not simply CHRIST's final coming, and the fire of the last day, is the more probable for two reasons: first, that he connects this purifying Presence of our LORD with the sending of His message to prepare the way before HIM, which, as we know by the New Testament, related to the coming of St. John the Baptist. Secondly, he speaks of HIM not as a Destroyer but as a Refiner, a Refiner especially of the Priests, the sons of Levi, who should thenceforth "offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness." This seems to tell us of some unspeakable mercy of His, to temper, as it were, the natural effects (so to call them) of His Purity coming in contact with us sinners, so as that HE may be in us, and with us, a fire not to consume, but to refine. Such was His veiling HIMSELF, as HE did at His first coming. We could not have seen His face, His Divine Nature, openly, and lived; but we are so far favoured, like Moses, that we are permitted to see His back parts, the outskirts of His great glory, shrouded by the curtain of His flesh. This we see, and to This we are brought near, and with This we even communicate; and so is fulfilled in every faithful soul, that which Moses saw typified in the bush; "the Glory of the LORD burned there, and it was not consumed." The GOD of Purity abides in man's nature, and it is not destroyed, but purified.

The course of the Church Services for to-day leads us to consider our LORD and SAVIOUR in this particular character, as a Refiner and Purifier of men, both by the Prophecy in the text, which connects His first coming to the Temple with His purpose of cleansing God's people; by the ceremony itself, in which our LORD and his Blessed Mother took part, as on this day; and by the sort of persons whom HE graciously admitted to bear a part in that ceremony, and to be in attendance on HIM, on this His first solemn entrance into His holy place.

First, the Prophecy is express. "The LORD shall suddenly come to His Temple, even the Messenger," or Angel, "of the Covenant; but who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when HE appeareth? for HE is like a refiner's fire, and HE shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and HE shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness."

Here it is plain, that in some way or other, the first coming of the LORD to His new Temple—new when Malachi wrote—should be connected with some great purification, which was to take place in His Church, the consequence of which would be, that HE would be fully reconciled to His fallen people. “Then shall the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.”

Next, consider the ceremony itself of the Purification. It consisted, we know, of two parts. First, the Blessed Virgin Mother brought to the Temple door a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons, the one for a burnt-offering, which was to be destroyed by fire; as an acknowledgment of what sinners deserve at the hands of the ALMIGHTY, and how entirely they are bound to yield themselves up to any punishment which HE in His just judgment shall ordain. The other dove or pigeon was, in like manner, to be killed and offered before the LORD, but instead of its being all consumed by fire, it was to be eaten by the priest or the person sacrificing; by which law of the sin-offering, I suppose, GOD intended to foreshew the way of communion, which HE would one day appoint; that JESUS CHRIST, the true Sin-offering, should not only die for us, but also be our spiritual food and sustenance in His most holy Sacrament.

Now the woman who after childbirth offered up this sin-offering, did thereby acknowledge the stain of sin, which cleaves inseparably to the conception and birth of all children, descended from Adam and Eve in the ordinary way, according to the Psalmist's confession, “Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me.”

Again: she acknowledged that her only hope of purification, from this or any other sinful stain,—her only chance of coming before the LORD and treading His courts without sin,—depended on a pure Offering, Whose Blood was to be poured out before the LORD, and of Whose Flesh the worshippers themselves were to partake at the hands of GOD's priests. That is, whether the person so sacrificing understood as much herself or no, she did in effect acknowledge, that her chance of acceptance lay in the Blood of CHRIST, and in communion with HIM. Thus our LORD was foreshown as the Great Purifier of the Church, both by His Blood

sprinkled thereon, and by His holy Flesh, whereof we were to communicate.

But there was also another ceremony to be performed by the newly-delivered mother, to which the offering for herself was, as it seems, but introductory. Supposing her to be a mother for the first time, as was now the case with the Holy Virgin, she was to acknowledge her child holy to the LORD, by bringing him to Jerusalem, God's own place, there to present him to the LORD. For from the time when the people came out of Egypt, God had declared the first-born of the Israelites to be every one holy to HIMSELF, in memory of that great deliverance which HE wrought by smiting the first-born of the Egyptians, and saving those of the Israelites. From that day forward, every male child that opened the womb was holy to the LORD, and was to be offered before HIM, and redeemed at a certain rate.

It is not hard to see the meaning of this law, what it taught God's people in elder times, and what it ought to teach us now. What so precious to a father or mother, as their first-born male child? By offering him, then, to ALMIGHTY GOD, they acknowledged themselves bound to sacrifice to HIM whatever they most valued and loved most dearly. It was in action the same as the words of David, "I will not offer a sacrifice to the LORD of that which doth cost me nothing." It is a plain lesson to all who would come near God worthily, that they can only do so by denying themselves.

But of this I shall have to say a word presently, when I have just pointed out what there was peculiar in the Virgin's offering to-day, as compared with all other sacrifices of the same kind, which have ever been offered either before or since.

The other Israelitish mothers offered, in acknowledgment and expiation of the sin which they had communicated to the infant newly-born. But the Holy Mother of our LORD needed not to make any such confession. Her offspring was pure and untainted, and had no occasion to be expiated. What are we, then, to understand by her sacrifice, over and above its being an expression of great humility and obedience? Surely we cannot be wrong in understanding this, that by it God's Providence did, in effect, place her at the head of all Christian mothers, who from time to time should come to offer the solemn and joyful sacrifice

of thanksgiving, for deliverance from the great pain and peril of childbirth, and for the blessing of a new-born infant. Even as in holy Baptism, the Minister, receiving the child from the parent or nurse, is a token, apt, and intended to remind us, of our SAVIOUR taking up the infants in His arms, to lay His hands on them and bless them; so each woman who comes to kneel at God's altar, with her thank-offering, according to the order of the Church, is a visible token and memorial of the Blessed Virgin, the chosen emblem of the Church, and, in a certain sense, the mother of all God's children on earth, offering up her sacrifice, not of expiation, (for there was no sin to expiate,) but of thanksgiving.

On such occasions it would be a good thing, a devout, as well as a joyful and pleasant thought, if Christian mothers and their friends would call up in their minds that sacred moment, when the Holy Family brought their acknowledgment to the FATHER, for the birth of the Holy Child JESUS. They would do well not to think themselves alone, but to feel sure that in spirit and intention the whole Church is giving thanks with them. What a pity it is, if any forfeit the blessing and comfort of such thoughts as these, by coming lightly and of mere custom; by considering little, and soon forgetting!

Again: the offering of the Blessed Virgin differed infinitely from all others, in the worth of the First-born, whom she presented to her God. The rest could only say, "Of Thine own have we given THEE:" but she could say, "I give THEE, O LORD, THYSELF." But the thought, like all other thoughts belonging to this mysterious relation of the SON of GOD to His Virgin Mother, is too transporting, too high, for our words and understandings both. Thus much, however, we may perhaps with reason believe, that her sacrifice was the top of all sacrifices, which any but the Eternal HIGH PRIEST HIMSELF could offer, and that parents especially may, in remembrance of it, encourage themselves in parting with their children for God's sake.

And here we come back to the great practical lesson, which the whole of this sacred and solemn transaction was meant to teach us and all Christians. Those who would serve GOD in His Temple worthily, must be purified by Communion with His SON: and this Communion is not in such sort GOD's gift, that we are to do

nothing towards it ourselves. Our LORD has given us to understand, that some are fit for the Kingdom of GOD ; some go into it before others. Who are they ? We may know by observing the kind of persons, whom GOD's special Providence assembled together in His Temple, to wait on His first-born SON, on His solemn entry and presentation therein. The persons found able to abide the day of His coming, the souls who could stand upright when HE appeared, were such as His pure and blessed Mother, presenting her very best to HIM who gave it, with a willing heart : a heart not the less willing and devout, because she was given to understand that some secret of calamity and sore trial was hereafter to be revealed to her, as the price of the mighty and unspeakable blessing she was receiving. "A sword" was to "pierce through her own soul also." The Holy Family was not to be a family of mere peace and quiet enjoyment, but rather out of it was to go forth the greatest division and disturbance that Israel had yet seen : the DIVINE CHILD, its hope and glory, was to be a sign spoken against. Thus the very act of most joyful thanksgiving was tempered, in the Holy Virgin's case, with a strong effort of submission and self-denial. While she felt herself most favoured of the children of Adam, she was made to feel also, that more would be required of her in the way of self-denial, than could be required of any other. So it is always, and with all. The greater GOD's mercies, spiritual or temporal, the more entirely must we sacrifice ourselves, deny ourselves the present enjoyment of them, if we seek to make the most of them as they really are.

Mark again who those were, who waited round on this day, and were the chosen witnesses of the LORD's coming, thus for the first time, to His Temple.

There was Joseph, His Mother's husband, a good and just man, whose praise is in the Holy Gospel, for considerate dealing with those whom he supposed to be in error, for exact obedience to GOD's commands, whether he learned them out of the Scriptures, or understood them by dream or message from Heaven ; and of whom the Church has ever believed, that he lived as a brother with the Blessed Virgin, from honour and reverence of the Incarnation of our LORD.

There was aged Simeon, just and devout, content to wait long for the consolation of Israel, and no less content to depart in peace when his eyes had seen that HOLY CHILD.

There was Anna the Prophetess, of a great age, who departed not from the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

Here, my brethren, are the tempers we should encourage, here are the practices in which we should train ourselves, if we would come worthily into God's Temple, into the immediate presence of our LORD. We cannot withdraw ourselves. As baptized Christians, even now we are in close Communion with HIM. If we will not, according to our poor weak measure, work along with His refining fire, while HE still gives us space of trial, we have nothing else to look for, but His devouring fire at the day of judgment.

These heavenly dispositions our LORD did in fact bestow upon us, when HE gave us, in Holy Baptism, His Spirit, whose fruits they are. We were then presented unto HIM in His Temple. HE graciously accepted us, and gave us pure and clean hearts. If we have since stained and polluted the hearts which His grace had cleansed : if we have defiled our own souls and bodies, the temples of His regenerating Spirit ; there yet remains no other way to us but only the way of Purity. Whatever toil, whatever self-denial, whatever watching, fasting, and prayer, it costs us, we must somehow obtain His grace, the grace of Purity, once again ; else there is no hope of our finding HIM a merciful HIGH PRIEST, to present us at last to His FATHER.

And this is not a work to be done in a moment. If God's most faithful and innocent servants—they who seemed fittest to stand before HIM—felt the sharpness of His refining fire ; if the Holy Virgin was to find a sword piercing her very soul ; if Simeon had to wait long, and Anna to serve with fastings and prayers night and day, both bowed down with extreme age, and making God's House, as it seems, their home ; how thankfully ought we to welcome any pain, any disappointment, loss, poverty, affliction, unkindness, which our good God may send upon us, in the hope that it may have a purifying effect on our fallen souls ! How ought we to busy ourselves, though late and very imperfectly, yet as thoroughly as we can, in prayer and good thoughts, and keeping ourselves strictly in order !

What have such as we are to do with enjoying life? Surely it were better to be ever "watchful, strengthening the things which remain and are ready to die¹:" for too certainly the works of most of us are as yet most imperfect before God, most unworthy of the baptismal grace which HE freely gave us.

¹ Rev. iii. 2.

S E R M O N C L X X .

THE OUTCAST'S PLACE FILLED.

PREACHED ON ST. MATTHIAS' DAY.

PSALM cix. 7.

“ Let his days be few, and let another take his office.”

THIS Saint's Day is different from all the rest in one very striking and awful circumstance : that it commemorates in a manner the fall of Judas, as well as the consecration of holy St. Matthias in his room. The sad event, which made room for this new Apostle, is by no means left out of sight, or lightly touched upon, in the Scripture account of his Election and Ordination. St. Peter in his speech to the assembled Disciples, and they all afterwards in their prayer to our LORD, make particular mention of Judas, and of his end, so unspeakably dreadful.

Therefore, as often as we keep St. Matthias' Day, we keep the memorial of the sin and misery of the traitor Judas also : and our thoughts are carried back to that severe and awful Psalm, the 109th, which contains at large the sentence of the Everlasting Judge on such wickedness as his : that kind of wickedness, which is properly called Apostasy ; when such as have been brought unusually near to GOD fall away from HIM, and their fall, by a most just judgment, brings a curse proportionate to their first blessing.

Such was the fall of our first Parents in Paradise ; of Esau, the first-born of a holy Patriarch ; of the Israelites in the wilderness, with the Cloud of Glory in sight ; of Balaam, the Prophet, whose eyes were open, and who saw the vision of the ALMIGHTY ; of Judas, Christ's Apostle ; of the Jews, His ancient People : and

still more, of Christians, who are now so near HIM by special grace. Such also was that event, which was the root and the type of all these, the original fall of the Evil one himself, from his place as a bright Archangel in Heaven, to be chief of those who are bound in everlasting chains under darkness.

Now two circumstances of the punishment of such as Judas are expressed in the Text :—a verse which St. Peter also quoted in speaking to the Disciples of his fearful end :—“ Let his days be few, and his office,” or Bishoprick, “ let another take.” The words in themselves sound simple enough ; they might seem to speak of no more than all human beings must undergo, by the necessity of their mortal nature. All our days are few : they are but as grass, they are gone almost before we can count them. All our places, stations, and offices, whatever they may be, must soon pass away from us, and another take them in our place. But this, the common lot of all, is here turned into a fearful and peculiar curse, for those who slight high privileges, and betray sacred trusts : ALMIGHTY GOD thus instructing us, that as HE can make blessings out of all to the good,—“ is able even of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham,”—so out of all HE can provide punishment for the wicked. And this too is seen throughout all His dispensations. The same pillar of the cloud, which was darkness to the Egyptians, gave light by night to the Israelites. The voice of CHRIST, which was healing to the faithful, caused the unclean spirits to cry out in torments. And for aught we know, the same divine Presence will be heavenly Light to one sort of souls, Hell-fire to another, to all Eternity.

No wonder then if such ordinary things as the shortness of life, and the dread of parting with our stations here, which are trifles, or even blessings, to the obedient, should be mentioned as real curses to the unfaithful and unruly.

At the same time it is to be observed, that these very circumstances are also means in God's hand, to lessen the quantity of mischief which is done by those who fall from HIM. Their “ days are few :” let them do their worst, they must come to an end in threescore or fourscore years ; and it has been thought that this was a merciful dispensation, ordered by the ALMIGHTY about the time of the Flood ; since, according to the rate at which man's wickedness was then increasing, the very world itself could

not have borne it, had men continued to live, as those before the flood, seven, eight, or nine hundred years each. It was merciful to the world, that their days were made in comparison few; and it may have been merciful even to themselves, for they had the less time to treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath.

Again, their having to part with their office, whereinsoever God may have trusted them, to another:—this also greatly diminishes the quantity of mischief they can do in it, and the quantity of scandal they bring upon their calling, especially if it be a high and holy one. Besides their having less time to do harm in, people live in hopes that they shall ere long see a change for the better, and their hope lessens their grief and offence.

The instance of Judas is a very plain one, for shewing forth the dealings of God's providence in this respect. His short life as an Apostle (for it had not been three years complete) would have been a blessing, had he been such as St. James, the first of the twelve who came to his great reward: he would have departed, and been with CHRIST so much the sooner. But as it was, what judgment could be more fearful? He had purchased a field with the reward of iniquity, and within a very few hours after, seeing that our LORD was condemned, he came and cast down what he had gained by it, and departed, and went and hanged himself; and then, even in his hanging, he had to endure some violent fall, so that he "burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out."

Thus his days were signally cut short; and as to another taking his office, St. Peter reminded the disciples that the Scriptures concerning him were of course to be fulfilled, especially two which he specified: "Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein;" and, "His bishopric let another take." No man dwelt in Judas's portion or habitation, for it was used only to bury strangers in, and was called the Field of Blood. Another took his Apostle's or Bishop's office, namely, the Apostle of to-day, St. Matthias.

Thus CHRIST so ordered things, that the very downfall of one of His own Apostles, which beforehand one would expect to be well-nigh the ruin of the Church, was made consistent with its continuance and prosperity.

Had Judas been allowed more time to exercise the powers of an Apostle, who knows what incurable harm he might have done in the infant Church?

Had his place not been filled up, it might appear as though God were forsaking us; as if the whole Church might possibly one day fail, through the unworthiness of its pastors. This the ALMIGHTY has, we trust, effectually provided against, by what is called the Apostolic succession, the handing on of His grace from age to age through the Bishops; of His care for which, the ordination of St. Matthias is the first example in the Church. We know by it, that it is not His will to let His Church's being depend on the character of His ministers; since after the very worst, after Judas by transgression had fallen, another was elected to take his part of the ministry and Apostleship. And so, what is truly wonderful to think of, he whom CHRIST had ordained, fell away and was lost; but he whom the Apostles ordained in the absence of CHRIST, and before the coming of the HOLY GHOST, stood firm, and kept his crown. Our LORD intended, as it may seem, in this as in many other ways to teach us, how entirely HE would have us regard His Church's commission as all one with His own.

Further, the Scriptures appear to signify, that this His dispensation concerning Judas was a kind of type or pattern of His dealings with the whole Jewish people when they proved unfaithful. For the sixty-ninth Psalm, which St. Peter on this occasion interpreted of Judas, "Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein," is explained by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans as concerning the unbelieving Israelites, and the punishment they would undergo for rejecting CHRIST¹. Nor is it hard to understand wherein the two are alike, and how the one may stand for the other—the traitor Apostle for the rebellious Jewish nation.

They are alike in this, that they both came so very near CHRIST, by His special favour; and therefore, when they proved unworthy, their punishments might well prove to be alike. Thus, as Judas's days were few,—as he was cut off suddenly in the early time of his Apostleship,—so were the days of the Jewish

¹ Rom. xi. 9, 10.

people few, in comparison with what God intended for them, in comparison of His true everlasting Church. They had been God's people for many hundred years, but those years were but a few days in God's sight, whereas HE meant them to have been His people for ever.

Then, whereas it is written of Judas, "Let another take his office," we know that the Christian Church, gathered from among both Jews and Gentiles, has been put in the place of Israel, to be God's minister, and by its union with CHRIST, to be Priest, Prophet, and Ruler on earth. And as Judas's name is a name of reproach, as the very place where he died had an evil mark set upon it, so, ever since the children of Israel were cast off for rejecting CHRIST, their name, according to the threatening of Moses, has become a proverb and a byword and an astonishment among all people.

Now it is a serious and alarming thought for us all, If Judas Iscariot, who, favoured as he was, had never received the HOLY GHOST; if the Jewish people, whose highest privileges were but a shadow of what we receive in Baptism,—if they had their days cut off by so dreadful a sentence, and their place in God's world given over to others: what are Christians, what are Christian pastors to expect, should they prove, after all, unclean and unworthy? As for the Church of God, we see and know, even by the ordination of St. Matthias, that HE will protect her and prolong her days, even through the worst times which evil men may bring upon her: "HE hath no need of the sinful man." Though a whole generation proved Judases, HE could raise up others like Matthias in their stead. But to us severally it is a fearful thought, how near we may go,—how near, alas! we have gone, towards forfeiting our privileges, and bringing the traitor's curse upon us.

Many Christians, too surely, have been miserably trifling with their own blessings, ever since they were able to think at all. They began by trifling with their prayers: they cared not to say them earnestly, though they were told never so often to do so. Satan was watching, ready enough to interrupt those whom he saw rather wishing to be interrupted. And so it has come to pass, that although they have gone on saying prayers regularly all their lives, it can scarce be said that they have truly prayed at

all. Inattention, thus indulged, is direct trifling with God : it is quite a different thing from the natural weakness and infirmity which causes even good men's thoughts, against their will, to wander in their devotions.

Young people who have got into this habit will, almost of course, behave disrespectfully at Church, another most ordinary way of trifling with holy things. Might we not truly call it another lesson in the devil's school? It is indeed a sight to make that evil one rejoice, to see how large a proportion of most congregations go on from week to week. Out of mere lightness and foolishness of heart, they trifle away that great blessing of being where CHRIST is. Many, nay all of them, know that they are doing wrong ; it is very little pleasure to them ; yet they go on, from mere bad habit, months and years, without seriously blaming themselves : every time they go to Church they trifle away some high and heavenly blessing, offered there by our LORD to His true worshippers.

Thus prepared by inattention in private prayer, and irreverence in God's house, they go abroad among the duties of life ; and their enemy is still at hand, and knows too well how to come upon them. He comes to them with bad thoughts ; and they, not having their hearts chastened by the continual remembrance of God's presence, open their minds to his impurities, instead of turning away from them at once. Bad thoughts bring irregular looks, dangerous liberties, disorderly doings, secret sins : and with these upon his conscience, the unhappy person goes again to the house of God, perhaps to His Altar, with far too little fear and self-reproach. He thinks, perhaps, that he means to amend ; but when the temptation comes again, it is but too often found that he has no real principle to contend against it. Again he falls, and again he comes near to Holy Things ; and except God deal with him, and open his heart afresh by some of His marvellous providential mercies, what can be expected of him, but that the HOLY SPIRIT, so continually grieved, should quite withdraw from him, and leave him to go down to his grave without any true penitence ; without ever really and sadly considering, how near he has come to the sin of betraying CHRIST, while his hand was with HIM on His Table ?

Judas's own sin, we know, had what many would account a

very slight and ordinary beginning. He kept the purse in which our LORD and His Apostles lodged what little money they had, and he was tempted to help himself to a little out of it, when he thought it would not be missed. Are there not very many Christians who would reckon this a small sin? hundreds of servants, who scruple not to help themselves when their master is out of sight, although their conscience tells them that if he were in sight they would be afraid and ashamed to do so? thousands of poor people, who make free in many ways with the property of their richer neighbours, and would rather not be known to do so? Why would they rather it were not known? Because their hearts tell them it is wrong, and they may be called to account for it. Yet the same persons not unfrequently go on, with little fear or remorse, presenting themselves before God in His holy services, as if HE had never said, "Thou shalt not steal."

I am not of course at once comparing them to Judas; yet surely they are so far like him, in that they fear not to keep company with CHRIST, while yet they are secretly taking a liberty which they know in their hearts CHRIST has positively forbidden.

Let them hasten to leave off their sin, lest their hearts grow incurably hard. Let them consider those fearful words, "After the sop, Satan entered into him." That is, when Judas was not moved by the gracious warning of our LORD, shewing him that HE knew what mischief he was secretly thinking of, our LORD no longer hindered the evil one from getting entire possession of him.

The nearer CHRIST has called us to HIMSELF, the more dangerous surely are the first beginnings and whispers of sin; and the nearer we have ventured to approach, the greater advantage have we given to Satan, except we tried in earnest to purify our hearts and desires.

No doubt, St. Matthias himself may have had trembling thoughts like these, wherewith to keep himself lowly and humble, when he was called to so great an honour, so high a place in the Church. And perhaps this was one reason, why the Apostles in their Ordination Prayer not only begged a blessing on Matthias, but also made particular mention of Judas and his fall; and what is more awful yet, of the place to which Judas was gone; for "he fell," say they, "that he might go to his own place." What

must have been the new Apostle's thoughts, when he was thus put in mind of Judas's place! How earnestly must he have prayed in his secret heart, that such place, or a worse, might never be his own!

I say a worse; for must it not be worse for those who, besides Judas's other privileges, have also that which is above all, union with CHRIST by His HOLY SPIRIT, and yet fall away as Judas did? That privilege the holy Matthias received within a few days, when the HOLY GHOST came down upon the assembled Apostles, and he never forfeited it; he went on glorifying God as an Apostle, until he was permitted to glorify HIM as a martyr. We in our measure have the same privilege: the HOLY SPIRIT came down upon us at our Baptism. We, too, are members of CHRIST; but whether our days in His kingdom shall be few or many; whether we shall be permitted to keep our place, or be cast out to make room for those that are holier and better, who can tell? Or how can a sinner ever be thankful enough that it is not yet over with him; that he has still time, he knows not how much, to humble and punish himself heartily for his great imperfection and unworthiness; to watch and break himself of all beginnings of sin; to subdue the flesh to the SPIRIT in all things; to acquaint himself with God in all the ways of His Church; to fear always; and to be more faithful and true in every part of his calling towards God and man?

* * * *The Second Sermon in this Volume (Serm. CLXVI.) was PREACHED ON THE FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST; the Third (Serm. CLXVII.) ON THE FEAST OF EPIPHANY.*

SERMON CLXXI.

THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH'S HEART.

PREACHED ON PASSION SUNDAY.

EXODUS ix. 35.

“And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let Israel go; as the LORD had spoken by Moses.”

THE history of the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt, is the first grand example in Holy Scripture of the warfare between the Church and the world, God's kingdom and the kingdom of the devil, which is continually going on, and in which we are every one of us, whether we know it or not, taking our part. CHRIST is come down to deliver us and our brethren, as HE came by Moses to deliver Israel from Egypt; and we are, every one of us, either helping or hindering His work: helping it, if we try in good earnest to become such as HE would have us, and to win others to HIM by good example; hindering it, if we think to go on pleasing ourselves, and walking by the low rules of this present evil world.

This part, therefore, of the Book of Exodus, is in figure and shadow the history of God's dealings with us all. As to the character of Pharaoh in particular, too often we may understand, by our own perverse and disobedient behaviour, how it represents the wilfulness of men, opposing themselves to the gracious ways of the HOLY SPIRIT for their salvation. Pharaoh is the type of the prince of this world, the devil, and of the wicked world itself. As he kept the children of Israel in slavery, so does the evil

spirit keep all God's people, so long as they are in their natural lost condition. Satan is as unwilling to have us delivered from him by holy baptism, as Pharaoh to let the Israelites pass out of Egypt through the Red Sea, and serve God in the mountain where HE commanded them.

Pharaoh, then, is the type of the evil one, but he is also the type or figure of this wicked world; and we may understand his conduct, by observing how the world behaves towards those, whom it has won back into its service, from the service of God, which is perfect freedom, whereof they were made partakers in holy baptism. Our own conscience will often help us too well to understand how the spirit of the world, which has too much power with us all, resists the good SPIRIT of God, and hardens us against it.

So again, what the Bible tells us of the dealings of ALMIGHTY God with this unhappy king, ought to serve us for a very solemn warning, how far we may be gone in sinful hardness without knowing it, if we once get into a way of dealing presumptuously with God's judgments and mercies; and what we must surely expect will be the end of such conduct.

"The LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart:" it is a very remarkable and startling expression, and no doubt was intended to be particularly noticed, for it is repeated very often in this history, no fewer than ten times. It is startling, for it seems at first sight as if it ascribed the sin of that wicked man to ALMIGHTY God; to HIM who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, who cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth HE any man. But a very little thought will show that God's hardening the heart of Pharaoh is very far from meaning this, though it is a deep mysterious saying, and we cannot suppose that we know all its meaning.

Thus much, however, we may observe, that in other places this hardening is attributed to the miserable man himself. "When Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said¹:" and afterwards, "Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go²:" and yet again, "When Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants³." The two sayings,

¹ Exod. viii. 15.

² Ibid. ver. 32.

³ Ibid. ix. 34.

“God hardened his heart,” and “he hardened his own heart,” are put one for another, in such a way as to show that they mean much the same thing. That is (and it is a most awful thought), God gives bad men a mysterious power, to change their hearts and minds continually for the worse, by their own wicked ways; so that in the end it may be said of them, that they cannot believe nor repent. At first they would not, and now they cannot. It is their own doing, because they bring it on themselves by their sin; and it is God's doing, because it is the just punishment, which His unchangeable law has made the effect of their sin. In this way Pharaoh and other wicked men at all times are said both to harden their own hearts, and yet to have their hearts hardened by ALMIGHTY GOD.

But besides this, the sacred history gives us a good many particulars, which may help us to understand the progress of this ruin and corruption in the heart of Pharaoh. The first time when the hardening of it is mentioned, is when God appears to Moses in the bush, and having promised him great things, and shown him how to do wonderful miracles, gives him to understand that not even so must he expect to prevail with the Egyptians. “I am sure,” He saith, “that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a strong hand⁴.” That is, God knew beforehand that the heart of Pharaoh was such, that not even miracles would overcome his obstinacy; as indeed we find, that when he did give way, it was upon his people's interfering: if it had not been for them, it almost seems as if there would have never been any show of repentance in him; and after all, how very quickly did he change his mind, and pursue after them again! The ALMIGHTY, then, knowing Pharaoh's heart to be such as this, determines to deal with him in a manner which ought to have softened and amended him, but which, according to his perverse way of taking it, will have the effect of hardening him more and more.

And of this He warns Moses again, when just on the point of setting out on his journey into Egypt. “When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all these wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand;” (for God had put into Moses' hand the rod which had power to work all these things;)

⁴ Exod. iii. 19.

“but I (so God speaks) will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go⁵.” Some such warning as this was no doubt necessary to prevent Moses, who was naturally not very hopeful, from being too much cast down, when he should see how little Pharaoh would regard even his miracles. When he had once been assured that the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart was in a certain sense God’s own work; that there was a special providence in it, which would turn it by and by to God’s glory and the good of His people; when Moses had heard this, it would prepare him to go on calmly in the midst of all discouragements: he would see God’s Hand, and feel His presence, even in the wickedness of the wicked, and would not think His mighty works thrown away, though at present, and in the sight of man, they might seem to bear no fruit.

See now how the prophecy was fulfilled; how God ordered His dealings with Pharaoh in a way which He knew would harden his heart, he being such as he was. Moses, at his first hearing of the king, wrought no miracles: he merely went in, with Aaron and the elders of the Jews, and gave God’s message to Pharaoh, who answered as a mere worldly proud person might be expected to do: “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice, to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go⁶.” So far, his heart was hardened by the message coming to him through a people whom he despised, and with no particular outward circumstances, none at least that appear, to draw his attention to them.

If Moses had had any remarkable gift of speech, it might have given him (so at least we may think) a better chance with the proud king. But this, too, we are expressly told, was by no means the case. Moses from the beginning had remonstrated with the Lord against his being sent on this message, because he was slow of speech; and when just on the point of going in to Pharaoh, it seems that he spake before the Lord again, “Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me?” One may well imagine how a haughty king might take hold of this among other things to encourage him in his contempt of God and His people; as certain enemies of St. Paul did after-

⁵ Exod. iv. 21.⁶ Ibid. v. 2.⁷ Ibid. vi. 30.

wards in respect of him : " His bodily presence," they said, " was weak, and his speech contemptible : " and as it was objected to One greater than either St. Paul or Moses, even to the HOLY JESUS HIMSELF : when HE taught in the temple, they said, " How knoweth this man letters, having never learned ? " "

Hitherto Moses had not exercised his miraculous power before Pharaoh ; but now he goes in again and works before him certain signs, which had been ordained beforehand, to show that God was with him ; he turned his rod into a serpent and back again ; he took of the water of the river and changed it into blood. This, we might have imagined, never could have been turned to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart ; but the magicians, the idolatrous wise men of Egypt, were permitted to do the same, or at least to seem to do it ; " Pharaoh called the wise men and the sorcerers, and they also did in like manner with their enchantments ; for they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents ⁸." And again, when the whole water of the river Nile had been turned into blood, " the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments ⁹." Once again, when the plague of frogs came on, " the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt ¹." Here was another excuse for Pharaoh, since he was bent on finding excuses, for hardening his heart, and refusing to obey the LORD. He might say to himself, as unbelieving people do, These miracles are all but a sort of witchcraft. So our LORD HIMSELF was accused of casting out devils through Beelzebub.

But, perhaps, of all God's providential doings, none had the effect of hardening the hearts of His enemies so completely, as His taking off His hand, immediately and repeatedly, when HE had begun to visit them with His plagues, even upon such very imperfect tokens of repentance. The moment Pharaoh expressed the least will to repent, Moses at once granted his request, and left to him to fix the time himself, when the frogs which swarmed over Egypt should depart in answer to his prayer ². When he had broken his word once, yet, on his professing a better mind, Moses again made haste to intreat relief for him : only warning him not to deal deceitfully again ³. And so in each of

⁸ Exod. vii. 11, 12.

⁹ Ibid. ver. 22.

¹ Ibid. viii. 7.

² Ibid. viii. 9.

³ Ibid. ver. 29.

the following plagues : the willingness of Moses to intercede, and of God to receive his intercession, served but to render Pharaoh more obstinate in his evil purpose ; so that even that horrible darkness, the reading of which almost makes a person shudder, was not, as far as we are told, so much cared for by him, as the lighter scourges had been at first.

All along, you see, God's visitations were such as to bring out any remnant of faith and reverence which might be lurking in Pharaoh's heart ; but he unhappily being dead to such feelings, all that was done only hardened him. See how in every instance, where he is forced to give way, he yet contrives to yield as little as possible. First he says, " Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land ⁴." When he is told that may not be, they being specially ordered to sacrifice in the wilderness, then his word is, " I will let you go, only ye shall not go very far away ⁵." By and by, overpowered with the swarm of locusts, and with the complaints of his servants, " Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed ⁶?" he offers to let them go, but not with their little children ; he would fain keep these for a sort of pledges that the parents would return ⁷. And it is just the same afterwards, with regard to their cattle. That darkness which might be felt so far moved him, that he called Moses again, and said, " Go ye, serve the LORD:" but he was again for adding a condition, " Only let your flocks and your herds be stayed ⁸." Thus he went on, his heart growing harder every time that the ALMIGHTY took his hand off him, until at last he had come to such a pass, that the sudden death itself of his own and his people's first-born, only caused him to repent for about thirty-six hours. In two days' time he was sorry that he had let Israel go, and was in hot pursuit of them again, contrary to all his promises and treaties.

Another method which Pharaoh had of hardening himself, was to take himself out of sight, to turn his back, or look another way, whenever any thing occurred, which put him more in mind than he wished of unpleasant duties. After the first plague, which was the turning the water into blood, it is said, " Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also ⁹." He got as fast as he could out of sight of the tokens

⁴ Exod. viii. 25.

⁵ Ibid. ver. 28.

⁶ Ibid. x. 7.

⁷ Ibid. ver. 10, 11.

⁸ Ibid. ver. 24.

⁹ Ibid. vii. 23.

of God's power and anger. When he had been talking with Moses and Aaron, and was unwilling to let the Israelites' children go with them as they desired, "they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence¹." And soon after he ventured to speak the word, so affronting to God's messenger, and as it proved, so prophetic with regard to himself, "Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face, thou shalt die²."

Then observe how regularly Pharaoh repents (as it were) of his own repentance, and wishes he had not given way so far to God's messengers; and how at the last he makes up his mind to do that which will be his utter ruin upon such a consideration as this: "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us³?" How like is this to too many of us; to the cold, scanty, unwilling tone of most of our penitential exercises! to the eagerness with which we fly back to our sins, when the pressure of the moment is passed away! Certain and most fearful symptoms, these, of a hardening, self-corrupting heart; a heart to which, we have too much cause to fear, God's mercies and judgments will alike prove occasions of falling.

To all this we may add, that Pharaoh, like other wicked kings, did not want evil subjects to encourage him; cruel and insolent taskmasters, who seemed to rejoice in the tyrannical message they had to deliver from him to the Israelites: "Fulfil your work, your daily task, as when you were allowed straw⁴." He had also magicians, who were but too earnest in withstanding Moses with him, and counterfeiting God's miracles: and again, he had servants, who on every occasion were ready, it appears, to harden their hearts with him. The Providence of the JUST JUDGE allowing this, tended greatly to confirm him in his reckless opposition to God's cause.

Such, then, is Pharaoh's case: beginning at first in heathenish ignorance, but forced in a manner, in spite of himself, by warning after warning, to become aware of the truth. Every one of those warnings was a chance given him to soften his heart. They were meant in mercy to him and his people; and indeed their issue always was mercy, for they ended in God's taking off the scourge,

¹ Exod. x. 11.

² Ibid. ver. 23.

³ Ibid. xiv. 5.

⁴ Ibid. v. 14.

until they renewed their sin : such virtue did HE graciously bestow even on their forced and outward and most unwilling repentance. But here was the misery ; they still kept hardening their own hearts, and therefore all God's compassionate care only turned to the hardening of them still more.

Now, think seriously but of this one word, *hardening* ; what an alarming word it is ! what an awful notion does it give us of the power we have over our own hearts ! of the peril we are in daily of abusing God's grace to our own perdition ; so that when HE means to rain mercies upon us, we turn it into a shower of temptations and corruptions ; as it is said in that Psalm of warning, " Upon the ungodly HE shall rain snares."

Think of this in good earnest. If you are apt to deal lightly with God's warnings ; if you are got into a way of sinning and repenting, and then sinning again ; if you feel it a relief ; when holy services are over, and when you turn your back on things sacred : think of Pharaoh, and of his miserable end ; and to-day, while it is called to-day, begin to leave off ways which are so like his ways.

SERMON CLXXII.

CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH IN A BAD WORLD.

PREACHED ON PASSION SUNDAY.

ST. JOHN viii. 59; ix. 1.

“Then took they up stones to cast at HIM; but JESUS hid HIMSELF, and went out of the Temple, and so passed by. And as JESUS passed by, HE saw a man which was blind from his birth.”

THIS fifth Sunday in Lent is called in some parts of the Church Passion Sunday, perhaps because some of the services of the day begin to have especial reference to our LORD's sufferings, and to prepare the minds of Christians for the mysteries of Passion Week. Such at least is the tone of the Gospel for this day: which tells us how the Jews of Jerusalem, who had several times before persecuted our Saviour, were actually beginning to stone HIM to death. The occasion was, His saying, “Before Abraham was, I AM.” By which words HE declared HIMSELF the Eternal SON of GOD, the same who in this day's first morning lesson says to Moses, that HE would be called, “I AM that I AM,” and bids him tell the children of Israel, “‘I AM’ hath sent me unto you.” The Jews counted this blasphemy, that HE, being a man, should make HIMSELF GOD; and according to the law of Moses, which commanded that blasphemers should be stoned, they presently caught up stones to cast at HIM; but JESUS hid HIMSELF.

This escape of our LORD was no doubt a great miracle. As a very old Divine remarks on it, “CHRIST here hides HIMSELF, not by shrinking behind partition walls, nor by interposing any thing else between them and His own Body, but by the power of His Godhead making HIMSELF invisible to those who sought HIM.”

Once before, as it seems, HE had wrought the same wonder, but not in the same place, nor among the same people. Very early in His ministry, when HE first preached at His own city Nazareth, the people of that place, being offended at His reprov-ing them for their especial want of faith, "rose up, and thrust HIM unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast HIM down headlong. But HE, passing through the midst of them, went His way." "Passing through the midst of them;" they are the very words which St. John uses in the text. Thus, as another old writer observes, "you may understand that our LORD'S Passion was endured not of constraint, but willingly : that HE was not so much taken by the Jews, as offered by HIM-SELF. For when HE will, HE is taken ; when HE will, HE escapes : when HE will, HE is hanged on a tree ; when HE will, they can lay no hold on HIM. So here HE is on the brow of the hill, whither HE had gone up to be cast down ; and behold, through the midst of them, changing or astounding their minds in the midst of their rage, HE passes safely down : for the hour of His Passion had not yet come." St. John says, HE hid HIMSELF, St. Luke does not say so : therefore it may be, that in the one case His enemies could not see HIM, any more than Balaam could the Angel ; in the other case, that though they saw HIM, the hand of God was on them in some remarkable way, to keep them from laying hands on HIM.

Another circumstance much to be observed, in our LORD'S manner, in both these two several miracles, is His passing immediately from His danger and the midst of His enemies, to the performance of works of mercy among worthier and more thankful people. When HE became visible again, it was to heal those who had need of healing. Thus from that hill at Nazareth HE went straight down to Capernaum, and healed in their syna-gogue a man who had a spirit of an unclean devil. And as HE passed out of the Temple, where the Jews had been seeking to stone HIM, HE saw the man blind from His birth, on whom HE wrought that wonderful miracle, putting clay on His eyes, and causing him to wash and receive sight.

Thus did our LORD very wonderfully both manifest and hide HIMSELF at the same time, according as men were willing to receive HIM or no. Thus did HE prepare His Disciples' minds

for His Passion, and show, that when HE did suffer, it was not through weakness, but of His own most merciful will. But the particular way in which at present I wish to consider this great miracle is the following: how it throws light on the true condition of CHRIST and His servants here in this evil world. It shows us what the true Church of CHRIST and what true Christians must expect: and it shows us also how they may behave themselves, in such trials, worthy of HIM whom they serve.

The plain doctrine of Scripture is, that as affliction is the lot of all men,—for man is born to trouble as surely as the sparks fly upward,—so persecution is the lot of Christians. They declare themselves in Baptism bound to be always at war with the world and the devil: and the world and the devil for their part will never leave them alone. On this point our LORD and His Apostles are quite plain and express. Our LORD in that prayer, wherein, departing, HE recommended His Church to His FATHER, particularly mentions its condition as one of continual war with this evil world, where it remains now for its trial. “I have given My Disciples Thy Word,” HE says, “and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that THOU shouldest take them out of the world, but that THOU shouldest keep them from the Evil One.” You see, our LORD’s own intercession is not that His people should be free from persecution and hatred, but that they should so behave themselves in it, as to give the bad Spirit no advantage against them.

To the same effect HE told them that they must take up the Cross, and pronounced it as one of the regular blessings of a Christian to be persecuted for righteousness’ sake: as much so as to be poor in spirit, pure in heart, merciful, or a peace-maker. And when His Kingdom was set up, it was a regular part of His Apostles’ instructions, that “we must through much tribulation enter into it.” And St. Paul tells Timothy in so many words, “All that will live godly in CHRIST JESUS must suffer persecution.” And St. Peter comforts them, not with a promise of ease and quiet, but with the thought, “Who can really harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” And St. John, writing to his fellow Christians, describes himself to be their “companion in tribulation, and in the Kingdom and Patience of JESUS

CHRIST." As much as to say that tribulation is the condition of CHRIST's Kingdom, and patience the virtue which properly belongs to it.

If we then have no persecution, no tribulation to endure ; if all men speak well of us ; if we are such that the world cannot hate us : is there not some reason to fear that we are not such as HE would approve ? The Cross is distinctly declared to be CHRIST's mark : if we have it not clearly upon us, we have the more reason to stand on our guard, and tremble, lest after all we should prove not to have been His true soldiers and servants. If we are among the unbelieving Jews, and they take up no stones to cast at us, I do not say that it is at once a sign that we are altogether not on CHRIST's side, altogether in a bad way : but surely it is a reason why we should be very humble ; why we should fear and suspect ourselves, and look narrowly into our own doings, and punish and deny ourselves in secret.

I will try to explain what I mean, by an example, ordinary and mean enough in comparison. Any young person among his companions, entering into their sports and amusements, and generally praised by every one of them, called universally kind, and frank, and goodnatured, and high-spirited : such an one will do well to take himself to task, lest he be encouraging sin in others :—rioting, or lewdness, or profane mirth, or idle useless ways ;—even if he be not exactly guilty of such sin himself. Any one who goes much into company, and is not noted as at all stricter than the rest, let him watch his own ways diligently : he may be far gone, before he is aware of it, in loose ungodly ways of talking and thinking : he goes a great way with the friends of the world : let him see to it, that he is not the enemy of God.

But further : the attack on our LORD on this occasion seems to show what way of thinking it is, and what particular part of the Church's doctrine, which is most apt to draw on itself the censure and enmity of the world. Why did the Jews try to stone our LORD ? because HE represented HIMSELF as having been before Abraham. So a while after, when HE plainly said to them, " I and My FATHER are one," they presently took up stones to stone HIM. And His final condemnation to death by the High Priest went on no other ground. Caiaphas asked HIM

in the council, putting HIM in a manner on His oath, whether HE was the CHRIST, the chosen of God? And when HE said, "I AM," and told them for a token of it that they should see HIM one day coming in the clouds of Heaven, they at once condemned HIM to be guilty of death.

Thus it has ever been between CHRIST and the wicked world. They would bear HIM to teach many things—to speak in praise of Love and Charity, or to utter His great unspeakable promises. But when it comes to this, You are members of CHRIST, walk worthy then of the vocation wherewith ye are called: CHRIST, who accounts you part of HIMSELF, is the Most High God; you, as united to HIM, are partakers of the Divine Nature; therefore you must really keep the commandments, you must be inwardly and really holy as HE is holy:—when this kind of doctrine is put forth, and urged home to the hearts of men, they grow uneasy, and start objections, and make difficulties, and say it is requiring too much; they never *can* come up to so high a standard: and they take people to have become their enemies, who talk to them in such a tone.

They can bear to think of Holy Baptism as a religious dedication of their infants to ALMIGHTY GOD: but they do not love to hear it called Regeneration. The Holy Communion they consider as a true memorial of the Body and Blood of CHRIST, but they do not like to say that in it they really and spiritually partake of His Body and Blood. And so in other things; the spirit of the world mixes insensibly with our views and thoughts, and tries to hinder us from considering our communion with CHRIST so very near as the Church constantly teaches. And if we indulge this unbelief and dislike, we shall come in time to hate the high doctrine and its maintainers. Like a certain persecuting Emperor of old, it will make us angry to hear persons confess that they bear about within them HIM who was crucified.

This too we may often see, in a small way, in many parts of men's conversation. They like to see people good to a certain degree, but that high and angelic goodness, that perfect separation from the things of earth, which becomes men who know that their life is hid with CHRIST in GOD, this is not to their liking—they hardly believe it sincere when they see it, and they generally have some word of contempt to describe it by. All such cases are but

so many tokens, that the true spirit of those Jews, who then took up stones to cast at our SAVIOUR, lives, and is active and mighty among us now.

This of course makes our duty, in respect of God's Truth and worship, harder to perform ; but it does not in the least make it obscure or doubtful. Whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, it is their Pastor's business to urge on them the truth, and their duties ; it is their brethren's business, by practising the duties, to show that they believe the Truth. We must not neglect, or forget, high and mysterious doctrines, or severe rules, because those with whom we are concerned are impatient at being put in mind of them : yet again, we must so teach them as they may be able to bear ; tempting them as little as possible to irreverent hearing or careless forgetting.

Thus our LORD, though HE punished the hardened obstinacy of those Jews, by openly declaring His Godhead, which HE knew they could not endure, yet in His mercy withdrew HIMSELF from their sight : HE would not yet suffer them to crown their unbelief with murder. "The WORD," says a great Bishop and Saint of old time, St. Athanasius : "The WORD HIMSELF, having been made man for our sake, condescended, when sought for, to hide HIMSELF :—and again, when persecuted, to fly and avoid the snare laid for HIM. For it became HIM, not only by hunger and thirst and affliction, but also by concealment and flight, to show HIMSELF clothed with flesh, and made man. Thus at the beginning, just after HE had been made man, in his childhood, HIMSELF by the Angel commanded Joseph, Rise, take the young Child and His Mother by night, and flee into Egypt, for Herod will seek the life of the young Child . . . Afterwards, when HE was showing HIMSELF as GOD, and had healed the withered hand, the Pharisees went out and took counsel against HIM to destroy HIM. But JESUS knew it, and departed thence. So, too, when HE raised Lazarus from the dead, from that day, we read, they took counsel to kill HIM : JESUS therefore walked no more openly among the Jews, but went away into a place near the wilderness."

In all these instances, JESUS CHRIST, His hour being not yet come, retired out of the way of His enemies, and gave them time to consider and repent. So it becomes us, when we bear witness to the truth, to be full of that great charity, which will make us put our-

selves in the gainsayers' place, and always consider what is most likely to do them good, and bring them to a better mind. As for example : if a bad or profane word is spoken in our hearing, it can never of course be right to seem amused with it, or in any way to become partaker of the sin : but it may often be best not openly to rebuke it at the time, but rather to turn the discourse for the present, and await some opportunity, when we can speak with the offender alone, and he is otherwise more disposed to listen to us. This is withdrawing the name of our LORD out of the way of reproach, as HE did His Person from the stones that were cast at HIM.

Only we must be very careful, that we do not so retire through cowardice or sloth, or out of care what men may say of us : and the proof of this will be, if we seek anxiously afterwards for opportunities of doing the good, which we thought we could not do at that time ; and if we deny ourselves something for the sake of doing it.

Moreover, when we hear persons speak disrespectfully, I will not say of our LORD and SAVIOUR HIMSELF, since that kind of blasphemy is not yet so common among us, but of His great Manifestation of HIMSELF in His Church, her ordinances and doctrines ; I say, when words of reproach are spoken against the Church, the Clergy or the Sacraments ;—our great and chief care ought to be, “What if I, by some sin of mine, have helped to give occasion to this great evil ?” We should consider how far our own behaviour has been from the pure and mild, the exact and self-denying precepts of the Holy Universal Church ; how we have tempted men to slight it, by our careless or self-willed ways. We should call to mind any private sins, to which we may have unhappily given way, more or less wilfully : we should consider in our hearts, “How could God hear the prayers of such as I have been, so inclining to wickedness in my heart ? No wonder if, when I have prayed in Church that God would make all Christians agree in the Truth of His Word, and live in unity and godly love, my unworthiness should have hindered in some measure the petition from being granted : no wonder if, where I am concerned, evil spirits have great power, and the work of God seems to go backward instead of forward. God grant that I may do better in what

time yet remains, and never again put a stumbling-block in the way of CHRIST's little ones."

Such seem to be some of the thoughts which would come most naturally into the mind of a considerate Christian, especially if trusted with others, when he meets with the contradiction of sinners—when being a parent, for example, he finds his children disobedient and unthankful ; when he is a master, and his servants prove unruly ; when being called on by his office to warn and guide others, his advice is set at nought, and his labours seem without fruit. Instead of spending his thoughts on their sinfulness, he will do well to consider his own ways, beseech God to show him where he has been wrong ; in what respects, secret or open, he has either given scandal to his brethren, or stained his own conscience, and forfeited the blessing of CHRIST:

And lastly, whatever trouble has come upon any man, either by his own fault or those of others, in the way of doing his duty : we learn by this example of our Blessed LORD, that it should not make us cold or lukewarm in doing our duty afterwards. HE having withdrawn HIMSELF from the wicked malice of the Jews, did not the less go on with the great work which HE had to do. HE saw the man born blind, begging at the gates of the Temple, and without any delay HE healed him, giving as his reason, " I must work the works of HIM that sent Me while it is day : the night cometh, when no man can work."

The danger which HE had just been in from the malice of the Jews, was to be a warning to His disciples, of what both HE and they might expect from the same enemies by and by. His hour was not yet full come, but it would come before long, and in the mean time His care was, to finish the work which His FATHER had given HIM to do.

Let us, all in our several stations, take the hint which our Master and only SAVIOUR thus graciously vouchsafes to give us. When untoward and perplexing things happen, let us go on the more earnestly with what we are sure is good and right, the fear of God and the keeping of His Commandments. When we are hindered from doing good in one way, let us go on straight, if God permit, to do some other good, or the same in some other way. Or if our hands seem entirely tied, at least let us do our-

selves that great good of humbling ourselves before God, searching and confessing our past offences, and beseeching Him that the Cross, which HE has laid on us, may be in His own mysterious way united to the Cross of His SON, and made profitable to our salvation.

S E R M O N CLXXIII.

PRESSING ONWARD TO THE CROSS.

PREACHED ON PALM SUNDAY.

ST. LUKE xii. 50.

“I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?”

Most persons know something of the feeling of suspense and anxious curiosity, when they are looking forward to any thing very serious, any thing which they think will greatly affect their happiness; especially when they have been a long time kept in expectation of it. The hours, days, months, years of waiting appear to them more and more tedious; they are more and more alive and awake with curiosity, to know what sort of a thing it will be when present, which now at a distance occupies their mind so much.

No one will wonder that this should be the case, when the thing we look on to is pleasant; but there is a feeling of the same sort of impatience, even though it be ever so painful. As those who are standing on some very high place, when they turn giddy, are half tempted to cast themselves down, so persons on the edge of any great and terrible change are more or less inclined, oftentimes, to plunge themselves into it: any thing, to their irritated minds, appears better than doubt and delay: they seem to themselves to know the worst, and not to care how soon it comes.

Now our Blessed LORD, as one of us in all things, sin only excepted, had His share of this feeling, so far as it is natural and innocent; at least, so we may understand His saying in the text. HE is speaking of the effects of His coming, the sacred fire which would be kindled in the whole world by His HOLY SPIRIT, the un-

happy division and warfare which His Gospel, though meant to be a Gospel of peace, should every where produce. "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? . . . Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division¹."

With these expectations of what should befall His Church, our LORD mingles also the sure and certain thought, which lay deep in His Divine Soul, of His own sufferings. "I have a baptism to be baptized with;" that is, "A flood of pain and fear and anguish, both of Soul and Body, is preparing in the counsels of God to overwhelm ME: I came into the world on purpose to endure it, and it is never out of MY thoughts; rather it occupies them more and more, and the time seems longer and longer, as I draw nearer the great trial and Agony, the bloody Sweat, the Cross and Passion."

HE knew how bitter it would be to flesh and blood; knew it far better than any of the children of men, even though they were inspired Prophets, ever knew of the pain they should suffer; for HE was the Creator both of His own soul and body, and of the very Cross on which they were to be tormented. None could know, as HE, what HE should suffer when HE entered on the work. Yet here you see what His mind was. Instead of shrinking from it, HE was the more eager to begin: so high, so courageous was His love to us, and His zeal for His FATHER's glory; so complete the condescension with which HE entered into this and all other innocent feelings of ours.

HE seems in the very next chapter to express the same kind of feeling, when told by the Pharisees of Herod's purpose to kill HIM. "Go ye and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." As if HE should say, "Herod need not trouble himself about slaying ME; I know well when it will be MY time to be perfected;—to be fully offered up in sacrifice for the sins of MY people;—but it cannot be just yet; 'I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following;' I must enter into Jerusalem, for it is a law of God's Providence, that a Prophet can hardly perish any where else. And all this must take some little time."

Thus our SAVIOUR expresses HIMSELF, somewhat in the same

¹ Luke xii. 49. 51.

way as an ordinary child of Adam might, when he found himself drawing near the great object of his whole life. And there are many other signs, in St. Luke's Gospel particularly, how His thoughts and wishes were continually turning that one way. "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem:" there was no thought of drawing back on account of the sufferings which HE foresaw there; rather, like a true and brave warrior, who would "tread the winepress alone," HE went on calmly and resolutely towards His great end, the saving of us by suffering. The expectation of it ran through all His sayings and doings, especially in whatever fell from HIM about taking up the Cross: that famous saying, which to His Disciples at the time must have seemed far beyond their understanding, but which they would understand when they came in sight of our LORD's own Cross. The Agony in the garden, that deep mysterious trial, was in this way but the completion and perfection of what HE had been enduring inwardly, during the whole time of His ministry. HE was straitened, as HE had been before, only far more intensely, till His great work should be accomplished.

To the children of this world the time seems long, until they have tried such and such a project, by which they expect to mend their fortunes; till they meet such and such a friend, from whom they have been long separated; till they receive such a favour or benefit, on which they have set their hearts. But to the SON of God the time seemed long, until HE should be betrayed by His friend, seized by His enemies, bound, spitted on, shamefully entreated, scourged, nailed to the Cross, and hanged on it; till His Soul should be "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," so as to force great drops of bloody sweat from His holy and suffering Body; nay, till HE should have to endure that unknown grief, which caused HIM to cry out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken ME?" HE felt as it were straitened and uneasy till these things were accomplished: so great was His love of souls, so unspeakable His anxiety to deliver a lost world from eternal ruin, and to pay down the price of His Blood for the Church, which HE was to redeem and unite to HIMSELF for ever.

In His mighty works and manifestations of power, HE had continually been looking on to this. On His first coming to the Baptist, to be set apart for His great sacrifice, HE used words

which most likely have some reference to His future sufferings : “ Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness ; ” “ thus,” that is, “ by being plunged in afflictions, which are to come round about ME like water, and then rising again out of them in the power of the quickening SPIRIT.” This seems to be part of the meaning of those deep and mysterious words.

And when HE began to work miracles, it would seem as if the secret silent feeling of His future sufferings accompanied HIM all along, and caused HIM, in a wonderful way, already to bear the burthen of those whom HE came to relieve. Somewhat of this sort St. Matthew appears to signify, where he says that our SAVIOUR, by healing the sick, fulfilled what Isaiah had written concerning HIM, “ HIMSELF took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.” Accordingly, in many of His miracles HE showed tokens of a heavy heart. When about to heal one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, “ HE sighed, and looking up to heaven, said, Be opened.” HE wept by the grave of Lazarus, though HE was just on the point of raising him. And when setting out into Judæa to perform that miracle, HE spake words which showed how straitened HE was in heart, how earnest until His hour came. His disciples had objected to His going again into Judæa, because the Jews of late had sought to stone HIM. His answer was, “ Are there not twelve hours in the day ? If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not.” As much as to say, “ My time is measured, and it is short, and I cannot afford to lose any of it : ” or, as HE had before warned the same disciples about the man born blind ; “ I must work the work of HIM that sent ME while it is day ; the night cometh, when no man can work.”

Thus, as HE in His merciful and infinite condescension limited HIMSELF as His creatures are limited,—HE who is the God of Eternity limited HIMSELF to a certain time,—so HE set us an example, who are all of us so limited, which way our thoughts should tend. Men are apt to think they shall die contented, when they have satisfied this or that wish, when they have done this or that work, when they have made so much money, when they have obtained such and such an advantage for those whom they leave behind them ; and that favourite object, whatever it be, haunts them night and day, and colours in a manner almost all their thoughts and words. So were our blessed MASTER’s sayings tinged all over

with the longing expectation of the Cross. And when the Cross itself came, His disciples, and we after them, might see the meaning of many, very many words and deeds, which could not possibly be understood at the first.

Now as our LORD in every thing else is the Head and Pattern of His Saints, and as their mind is the mind of CHRIST; so also in this point, of looking forward anxiously to the Cross, longing for the hour to come, when they may take it up for His sake, and for the sake of their brethren. As in other respects, so in this, the Saints show themselves new created after the image and likeness of their MASTER. Thus St. Peter, having had a promise from CHRIST, signifying what death he should die, carried the thought of it about with him wherever he went, as he shows by his way of writing when that hour was drawing near. "I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that I must shortly put off this my tabernacle, even as our LORD JESUS CHRIST hath showed me."

St. Paul, too, more especially—whom we are directed to follow as he followed CHRIST—shows himself in many places entirely possessed with this divine and glorious desire, of sacrificing himself more and more entirely to the glory of his LORD and the salvation of his brethren. Thus, to the Philippians, writing from prison, and in more or less danger of death, he uses the very same words as our Blessed LORD in the text: "I am in a strait, I am straitened, betwixt two things, having a desire to depart and to be with CHRIST, which is far better; nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." Whether he was then to live or die, he was in a kind of strait or agony, wondering how he might do most and best for the great cause in which he was engaged. It took up his whole mind, and left no room at all for the ordinary cares and pleasures of life, which we too commonly allow ourselves to be carried away with.

In another place he tells us what it was, which caused this thought to prevail over all others in his mind. "The love of CHRIST," he says, "constraineth us:" it fills our very heart, and makes it in a manner ache with longing to have right thoughts of Him, and behave ourselves worthily of Him; it occupies us entirely, and carries us quite away: "because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead, and He died for all, that they

which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto HIM which died for them and rose again."

Thus, as CHRIST was straitened, until His painful Baptism of blood and sorrow was accomplished, so St. Paul, and all who resemble him, are straitened, until they can find some way of giving themselves up more entirely, body and soul, life and death, to HIM who thought nothing at all, not even heavenly and divine glory, too dear to give up for them.

And this feeling, which St. Paul's writings express, agrees perfectly with his history, as we read it in the Acts of the Apostles. He is continually journeying, teaching, preaching; he gives himself no rest in body or in mind; he is "pressed," that is, straitened, "in spirit, declaring to all that JESUS is CHRIST." So deep is his feeling of the mercy which he had received, in being not only baptized but ordained, not only forgiven but taken into the special service of JESUS CHRIST, that he knows not how he can ever do enough, how he can ever be sufficiently active in declaring to his brethren the message with which he is entrusted.

Then as his own departure drew nigh, hear how he welcomes it, how his whole heart is set upon it: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness. The LORD shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom." You see, the thought of what is coming takes him up entirely; he has neither ear, eye, nor mind for such matters as will come to an end with this short life. He has "a Baptism to be baptized with," a martyr's death to die for CHRIST's sake and the Gospel's, and he is straitened, pressed in spirit, full of expectation and suspense, until this great and happy work, which he knows God has to do with him, be accomplished.

Now, we are to be followers of St. Paul, as he was of CHRIST. We, too, have all "a Baptism to be baptized with:" we have our appointed portion of cares and sufferings to go through, our sorrows, purifying or penitential, as we have wandered less or more from the happy innocence to which God called us in Baptism. If we have nothing else to go through, that at least awaits us which is the common lot of all men. Be our paths in life what they may, they must every one take us through the

valley of the shadow of death. We *must* come into those deep waters, so that the floods will run over us.

If, then, we will enter, in some faint measure, into the mind of CHRIST and of His most faithful servants, must we not endeavour to turn our hearts, habitually and continually, to that which we know must soon come? Must we not very often set ourselves to consider our own death, and what will come after?

As it is, when we lie awake on our beds, or when we are journeying alone, or when in any other way our thoughts are left free, we are too apt to have something or other of this world, with the thought of which our spirits are pressed, and we spend ourselves with vain longings to have it accomplished, and imaginings how it will be with us, after such and such a change, painful or pleasant, shall have taken place. But when we have learned to attend to the warnings of Holy Scripture, our thoughts and imaginations in solitude will be very different. Then, as we lie awake, or as we travel alone, we shall be carried on in our minds to that time, when our place on earth will know us no more; when the things which are now present, and which in spite of ourselves lay so fast hold of us, will have passed away as if they had never been; and the future, which is now so hard to fix our hearts on, will have become present, never to pass away. Then, instead of representing to ourselves this or that friend on earth, whom we expect to see at such and such a time, we shall try to set before our mind's eye HIM whom we are sure to see before very long, JESUS CHRIST on His Throne of Judgment. Instead of picturing in our fancy this or that place which we hope some time to see, we shall let our contemplations wander on into those regions of joy and woe, in one or other of which, we know, we must soon have a home for ever. Instead of planning restlessly and wearily what we have to do next, and what after that, in some pursuit which happens just now to be interesting, we shall be straitened and anxious, thinking how little we have done yet, and what we may and ought to do, for CHRIST and the Church's sake: we shall be contriving how to lay out ourselves more entirely, to sacrifice something more to HIM, Who never yet overlooked the smallest act of true devotion and self-denial.

Persons who are really subduing their selfish feelings, and fixing their hearts on these great things, will find by degrees

that the world is too strait for them; and the thought of death, awful as it must always be, will come into their minds not unaccompanied with a sort of thrilling hope, a wondering into what new and high regions they will find themselves let loose, when the spirit takes leave of the body; and still more when both body and spirit, by the Grace of HIM who died and rose again, shall be called together from the grave to their eternal state. By degrees these real and unspeakable things will take up more and more room in their minds; they will mingle more and more with their daily life and conversation: wherever they go, they will bear about with them the remembrance of death, judgment, eternity, Heaven, and Hell: whatsoever their hand findeth to do for God and CHRIST, they will do it with all their might, and without delay, knowing that "there is no device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither they are going." They will find themselves less dejected and disappointed, when their earthly matters turn out untowardly; less excited and lifted up, when they seem to be prospering and having their own way, and when things prove such as they had judged them to be.

Surely, after all that can be said in praise of gaiety and lightness of heart, and enjoying ourselves while we can, this "mind of CHRIST," this serious temper, is what every one at the bottom of his heart knows to be the only reasonable and right one. We know, every one of us, that the great overwhelming Day will very soon be here, and that when it comes, he will have least to regret, who has thought most of it beforehand, and mixed it most up with all his other thoughts. Surely each one of these holy seasons, such as Lent, and Passion-week, and Easter, which shall have passed away unimproved by us in meditations such as these, will then rise up in judgment against us; all serious occasions, whether of joy or sorrow, whether the solemn times of the Church or our own household matters, will add weight to our burthen, if we have not tried to make them serious.

And well, on the other hand, will it be for those who, with the faithful Apostle, shall have surrendered themselves to the full influence of those great thoughts, which being enough to fill the Mind of the SON of GOD HIMSELF, are yet graciously put by HIM within reach of the meanest of His Disciples, according to their measure. Well for those who, knowing that God has a great

work of Penitence and Reformation to do in them, feel restless and straitened and uneasy till it be accomplished. Well for those who study and toil and lie awake, contriving not about their own profit or pleasure, but how best to save their souls, do good to their neighbours, and glorify their SAVIOUR.

S E R M O N CLXXIV.

SAINT MARY UNDER THE CROSS.

*PREACHED ON GOOD FRIDAY, 1842, BEING ALSO THE FEAST OF THE
ANNUNCIATION.*

ST. JOHN xix. 25.

“There stood by the Cross of JESUS, His Mother.”

It might have been thought that the One Great Unspeakable Object, which is this day presented to the eyes of Men and Angels, God Incarnate crucified and dying, should so take up all our regard, that we should hardly have eyes or ears, or any sort of attention, for any thing besides. It might almost seem disrespectful, to turn away our thoughts for a moment, from Him who hangs on the Cross, to any thing else, though ever so near it. But Holy Scripture teaches us otherwise, surrounding as it does that glorious and awful Cross with so many objects more or less closely approaching it, which it even invites us to look on: friends and enemies and indifferent spectators; blasphemers and penitents; Jews and Gentiles; the earth quaking and the sun hiding its face, the vail of the Temple rent in twain, and the very bodies of the Saints which slept coming out of their graves. All these things we are to attend to: why else are they set down in the Gospels? and without due attention to them, we shall be less perfect than we might be in our thoughts of that great overpowering Object, Who is set in the midst of them, and towards Whom they all look.

And among them all there is one circumstance, which must

draw in an especial manner the attention of all thoughtful adorers of our SAVIOUR, because it seems to come nearer to HIM than all the rest: I mean that which is mentioned in the Text, "There stood by the Cross of JESUS, His Mother;" she who was the nearest to HIM of all created beings; of whom HE became incarnate; concerning whom our Church teaches, that of her substance, in her womb, HE took man's nature upon HIM; whom, therefore, the whole Church teaches us to call, The Mother of GOD: she stood by, and beheld HIM in all that deep suffering; heard, as it seems, His last words, and saw HIM die.

For a mother to be present at the death of an only son, is an affecting thought at any time; a grief too deep and mysterious for any quite to understand, but those who have felt it: but for her who is highly favoured, the Virgin Mother of the Blessed JESUS, to stand by and see HIM crucified between two thieves, and hear HIM cry out, "Why hast Thou forsaken ME?"—this surely is a secret and mystery of anguish, as much above what ordinary mothers can understand, as their grief is more than can be comprehended by any but mothers.

Therefore the eye of every one, who has but ordinary human feeling, turns of course towards her more especially, among the circumstances of our LORD'S Passion: much more the eye of a thoughtful Christian, believing and considering the unspeakable honour she had received, in becoming the Mother of HIM who is Very GOD; to such an one, the presence of the Blessed Virgin by the Cross will seem a very remarkable circumstance, setting forth His adorable Providence, in bringing nearest to HIM in sufferings, her who was nearest in Blood, and whom HE most loved and honoured.

And this train of thought, so natural to a Christian in all years, when the Holy Week comes round, seems to come recommended to us this year, by the remarkable circumstance that Good Friday falls on the same day with the Feast of the Annunciation. The day of our remembering the LORD'S death is the same with that on which the Angel came to declare His wonderful Incarnation. The moment in which HE emptied HIMSELF of His glory, and took on HIM the form of a servant; and the other moment in which HE became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross; the first beginning and the final consummation of His

sacrifice ; these two awful moments are in this year's Calendar gathered together in one. The Blessed Virgin seems in a remarkable way to be brought and set by the Cross : and the Church's Collect, for the Feast of her Annunciation, seems to come home to our minds with more than its usual meaning. For in that Collect we pray that all of us, "as we have known the Incarnation of our LORD JESUS CHRIST by the message of an Angel, so by His Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of His Resurrection ;" which words seem clearly to connect the Annunciation with the Crucifixion, and to set before us in some sort the Mother of our LORD, the highly favoured and deeply afflicted one, as our pattern how to wait on CHRIST from the beginning to the end, with the Cross always in view.

Let us then try to fix our minds for a short time, with the best of our weak adoration, on this particular point of our LORD's Passion, that HE had His blessed Mother in sight, and tasted to the full that deep and piercing affliction, which dutiful hearts feel, when those dear to them are suffering, especially if that suffering be on their account.

We see at once that HE graciously teaches us hereby, to turn towards His Cross for a remedy, as in all other sorrows, so in every kind of family distress ; in the sickness, death, and sufferings of kinsmen or near friends, and in our own sufferings, so far as they affect our friends. No burthen of that kind so heavy, but a man may find strength to bear it, if he will place himself by the Blessed Virgin under the Cross, and look up and hear the gracious words there spoken to her.

HE who recommended to one another's care His Mother and His most favoured Disciple, in some of His last words, when the pains of death had begun ; it cannot be that HE should be ignorant of any part of what His servants feel, when His Providence calls them to separate one from another. HE knows it all, for HE put it into our minds. HE created us at first with that tender affection, which all bear to parents and children, brethren and sisters ; and His HOLY SPIRIT is ever pouring more and more charity into our hearts, if we will but dutifully open them to HIM.

We are sure, therefore, that the gracious SON of MAN feels for and with us His poor creatures, both in our affliction on losing friends or seeing them suffer, and in the comfort we take in their

presence when we are afflicted. HE had before wept at Lazarus' death; HE had had compassion on the widowed mother at Nain; and now HE looks down from His Cross, in the midst of His pangs, and is afflicted in the affliction of His Mother.

And because, as it seems, she had no near kinsman at hand, and Joseph her husband was probably now dead, HE points out one who should do a son's part by her, saying to her, "Behold thy Son," and to him, "Behold thy Mother:" by which HE teaches us, that in all our bereavements, the comfort we take in one another's presence and care comes in truth from no other but HIM: it is HE who provides so wonderfully, as we often see, for those who would otherwise seem to be left helpless: "HE is a Father of the fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widows;" causing continually some one to be at hand, who can more or less take the place of such as are removed by His chastisements: HE will open "fountains in the wilderness, and streams in the desert:" if they look to HIM in earnest, they will find cause to say with Hagar, "Thou God seest me."

And whereas men's earnest affection teaches them to feel, that after all, nothing can entirely make up for the loss of the person they are mourning for; "such an one," they say, "may wait on us as well, may do as much for us, but he never can be the same to us as he whom we have lost, because he never can be the very same person:" our Blessed LORD, in His extreme mercy, has provided for this want also, instructing us, that by virtue of our common mysterious Union with HIM, we are not entirely separated from those who seem to be most entirely gone from us. They are not departed, though they have departed; we are not left altogether without them, so long as both they and we are one with HIM, who never can leave us nor forsake us.

Consider what a difference this would make, what a light it would throw on the death-beds of Christian people, if both the dying and their friends had really such a faith as this, and had lived such lives as not to forfeit the blessing of it: if we felt that although persons very dear to us are taken out of sight, they are not taken away from us; that in Holy Communion especially, when the Priest makes mention of all who have "departed this life in God's faith and fear," they are invisibly with us, as part of the "company of Heaven."

Again : it seems often bitterly to heighten the sorrows of those who are dying, when they think of leaving those nearest and dearest to them ; they are oppressed with the thought, Who now will care for them, and look after them ? But here, in our LORD'S Passion, such persons have the tenderest assurance, that HE will more than make up their loss to those left behind, if not unworthy : nay, that by virtue of their mystical union with HIM, the departed will themselves be present with the survivors, more entirely and intimately present with them than in their lifetime.

And, indeed, the thought of CHRIST being with those who are left behind, in that very near and wonderful sense in which HE is with worthy communicants :—this thought, really received and permitted to sink into the mind, would seem enough to overpower and swallow up all fear and care, about our being separated from them. God seems to say to the mourner, in words like those of His Prophet, “ I, even I am HE that comforteth you : who art thou, that thou shouldst be dejected on account of a man that was mortal, or of the son of man who was made as grass ; and forgettest the LORD thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth ? ”

Nay, even in that very sad case, when the departing parent or friend has reason to fear, that those for whom he is anxious are going on in such a way as to forfeit the blessed union with CHRIST, on which all hope and consolation depend : even then the circumstances of this moment may cause a hope which could hardly be felt otherwise. HE who felt so deeply for His Mother, who knows how HE may be touched with the tears and anguish of a dying Christian, pleading with HIM for those who seem now to be lost sheep, but whom God, with whom all things are possible, may yet restore, if earnestly and constantly called upon ? As we read of the mother of a great saint, herself a great saint too, that when in the early part of her son's life she bewailed his fall bitterly, and seemed almost to despond concerning him, the holy St. Ambrose told her not to despond ; so many prayers were almost certain, one day or another, to prevail, and win him back to God. Thus the Cross is man's hope and remedy, even in that seemingly hopeless case, of one on whom His power has been tried, and who is apparently not the better for it.

All this, the thought of our dying LORD with His Mother was

meant to be to all Christians: and all this it is to those among Christian mourners, who have in some sort duly prepared themselves for it; but not if people have been bred up from the beginning in ease and comfort, and never taught seriously to deny themselves; not if they have been always used to say, "Tomorrow shall be as this day, and yet more abundant." Our LORD did not so prepare His blessed Mother for the immense grief and unspeakable disturbance of His Passion: HE had been long and effectually, though not always directly, giving her to understand what she had to expect. Very soon after His birth, the prophet, the aged Simeon, after speaking of her Son's glory, adds to herself this most charitable caution: "This Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against: yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also." For this, we may conjecture, our LORD had spoken to her, at one time, about His hour coming; at another time, about His being in His FATHER's house, and therefore away for a time from her: at another time, about His being a brother and a child, not to her and His blood relations only, but to all men whatever, who will do the will of God.

All these sayings, it would appear, would prepare the Virgin by degrees for the awful Cross: and in like manner Christians have plenty of warnings to look on to "the days of darkness, for they will be many." Every day of this sacred time of Lent, of this Holy Week especially, is a notice repeated every year of our lives, that we must prepare to take up the Cross, to bear our share of our Blessed LORD's afflictions, for without doing so it is in vain to think of entering into His glory. They who take that notice, and prepare themselves accordingly, humbling and denying their own souls and bodies, they will be provided and strengthened against temptation and tribulation, when they come, in a manner which now they little dream of: as the Virgin Mother, no doubt, felt herself, she knew not how, strengthened to endure what awaited her under the Cross, by the many tokens, silent or express, which her Holy Son had been always giving her, of a deep tide of affliction rolling on. They will lie the more easily on their own sick bed, and will watch the more calmly and effectually by the sick beds of those who are dear to them.

Were it only on this ground, one might see the use of that self-denial, which the Church orders, and which so many neglect and scorn. It would prepare us to be patient ourselves, and charitable to others, as a nurse or a physician is prepared by the like self-denials. It would introduce us in good time to the House of Mourning; so that when we are called in our turn to dwell there, it might not seem so strange and confounding to us, but we might have the more presence of mind, to do all our duty, and give God all the glory.

It is also to be considered, that by such lowly and self-denying habits we put ourselves more nearly into the Blessed Virgin's place, in respect of the nearer knowledge of CHRIST's dignity and glory, which she had, compared with the other witnesses of His Death. She among them all knew most of His Divine Nature: the secret of His unspeakable Birth was in a peculiar sense hers, the Angelic messages had been sent, and the prophetic words addressed to her: as therefore her grief was more than others, so was her preparation to bear it: and we too, in our measure, might be prepared as she was, if we would practise in all things humility and subduing the flesh. For to the humble and self-denying, God reveals His high mysteries: other people *say* the words of the Creed, but they *feel* them: the ALMIGHTY JESUS, their crucified LORD, makes HIMSELF in an especial manner present to such: so that when they are to bear a somewhat heavier portion of His Cross, they can bear it the better, being endowed with some of His strength.

But here comes in a serious consideration; that as far as knowledge goes, although the Blessed Virgin had so much the advantage of the rest who were by the Cross, yet we are not sure that she had the advantage of us. The least in the Kingdom of Heaven, as he is greater than the Old Prophets, or St. John the Baptist, so he knows, by the Church's Creed, that He who died upon the Cross is God made Man, as certainly as the Blessed Virgin knew it her very self. When therefore affliction comes upon us, we ought to be found ready to bear it as she did. Whatever be its form, whether sickness and pain of our own, or the sickness of dear friends, and the pain of parting with them, or ill-usage, or want, and doubt about our maintenance; to us it should always take the form of the Cross: we should feel it as placing us there,

by the side of CHRIST's Holy Mother; and the same thoughts which she had to support her, we ought to be furnished with.

Sad indeed and shameful it is to think, how far otherwise we are too commonly minded. We may put this matter to present proof, by asking ourselves how it is, that in this very day and hour, we feel concerning our LORD's sufferings (to say the least) so very little of what a Christian would wish to feel. When we have answered that question thoughtfully, we shall know what danger we are in, and on what side, of casting away the benefit of our own Cross, whensoever it shall please God of His gracious goodness to lay it upon us.

For instance, it is matter of miserable experience, how impurity of heart deadens all feeling of CHRIST's Presence, how it unfits people for prayer, and makes them dull and indifferent even in these most holy times: and it is unhappily no less certain, that the awful lessons of sickness and death, of sorrow and pain, are lost upon the soul possessed with that unclean spirit: there may be natural tears, there is often softness of feeling, there is sometimes patient kindness in waiting on the afflicted: but the great, the crowning, what one may almost call the Sacramental, blessing, offered by God's grace to worthy attendance on such scenes,—I mean their conforming us more and more, and bringing us nearer, to the Cross of our LORD,—this surely is forfeited by unclean thoughts and habits: such an unhappy sinner, without deep and earnest repentance, is not only unfit to imagine himself standing with the Holy Mary, under the Cross of our LORD, but he is unfit to stand by the death-bed of any whom he loves; there is great fear that the Cross laid upon him will but harden his heart, and make his case worse. What a sin then is impurity of heart, which goes so near to forfeit that last and best chance of amendment, God's afflictions entering in and humbling our souls!

And it is not much, if at all, better, if a man's sin be intemperance or covetousness, or love of ease and pleasure, or any thing else entirely selfish. However near we have been brought to CHRIST, by Holy Baptism first, and religious education afterwards, these evil habits will before long entirely separate us from HIM; for they are in fact so many constant endeavours to shake His Cross off from our shoulders.

Let us be aware of this danger : let us remember that while the Blessed Mary, she who was all Purity and Humbleness, drew near to her suffering SON, and was sustained by HIM, there was among those who knew most of His glory, and had been allowed to draw nearest to HIM, one who dared not approach His Cross at all, Judas Iscariot, who when he heard of the Passion, was shocked indeed, but despaired instead of amending. We have been admitted to his first privileges, and more : let us dread his end, and worse.

And as we are sure that the Blessed Virgin never could forget the moment when her SON, who is her GOD, spake to her in His agony ; so let us strive and pray to remember His Cross in all times and circumstances. If our lot be peaceful and our home happy, let us think with ourselves, " This, with all other blessings, was purchased for me by the wounds and death of our LORD : it is dearly bought, let me at least not abuse it." If, on the other hand, HE have begun already to lay His Cross upon us, let us strive daily to grow in purity of heart, and to disengage ourselves from all that is proud, and worldly, and selfish : considering what pity it were, that even the chastisements of GOD, our last hope, should be thrown away upon us : that the very shadow of the Cross, under which we are brought, should do us no good.

S E R M O N C L X X V .

THE CHRISTIAN GOOD-NIGHT.

PREACHED ON EASTER EVE.

PSALM iv. 8.

“I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest, for it is Thou, LORD, only who makest me dwell in safety.”

THIS is one of those many verses in the Bible, in the Psalms especially, which must come home to every heart of man, if read with any degree of simple Faith. It sets full before us the most comfortable and refreshing picture of a devout, sober, honest person, after his day's work ended, his passions kept in order, his sins repented of, and his prayers seriously said, laying himself down to his night's rest, in the full consciousness that he is neither alone nor unguarded; that as there has been a merciful Eye watching over him, a mighty Hand stretched out to guard him, through the dangers and temptations of the day, so it will be with him in the night also. His limbs are grown weary, but the Arm of the LORD is not so. His eyelids sink down with sleep, the Eye of the LORD never becomes heavy. Therefore such an one, be he young or old, rich or poor, is able to compose himself to sleep without fear; although he is more aware than other less thoughtful persons, of the enemies that are around him—the spirits of darkness—who would fain do him harm in his sleep. The considerate Christian knows and thinks more of these than other men do; but he is not, therefore, afraid of the night, nor of darkness, because he knows and thinks more also of HIM who is stronger than all they; who has encouraged him not to

be afraid for "the pestilence that walketh in darkness," any more than "for the sickness that destroyeth in the noon-day."

This entire rest and tranquillity of God's faithful servants, when they lay them down on their bed at night, is beautifully expressed in the text by the words, "I will lay me down in peace," as they stand in the original language. "I will lay me down," says holy David, "*all together*:" all my powers of mind and body, agreeing as it were one with another; not torn by violent passions, by desire on the one hand and remorse on the other; not in the condition of the natural man as described by St. Paul, "The good that I would I do not, but the evil that I would not that I do:" and again, "I delight in the Law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind:" not so is it with him, of whom the Psalmist here speaks, but rather he resembles the spiritual man, as described by the same St. Paul: "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST."

Another thing seems worth observing here, which indeed I have already touched on: how Catholic, that is, Universal, is the thought expressed by this verse of the Psalmist: there is no one condition or state of life which it suits better than another; it belongs alike to you, to me, to all. For why? the need of taking rest in sleep is an universal law of God's Providence over men here in this lower world. In respect of it there is no difference between the highest and the lowest. Therefore, as death, so sleep, may be truly called a great leveller. The greatest king and the meanest of his subjects, whatever difference there is between them at any given time of their waking moments, must alike surrender themselves up, and fall down helpless, and forget themselves in sleep, before a great many hours are over. To every one of us, one as much as another, there will then be but one chance of safety; that is, if God should be pleased to watch over us, and be with us, when we are away from ourselves. It is one of God's ways of continually reminding us all, what frail helpless beings we are; what an absolute nothing without HIM.

But as sleep is the image of death, and as the slumber of every night, rightly understood, is to a Christian a kind of sacramen-

tal token of that last long sleep ; so these same words may well be used, and always have been understood by devout persons as most proper for a *dying* Christian also, " I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest, for it is Thou, LORD, only who makest me dwell in safety."

I say " of a dying *Christian* : " for such an one only has a warrant from Holy Scripture to regard death as no more than a quiet sleep. Observe how these expressions, " fallen asleep," " sleeping in JESUS," and the like, are always used in the New Testament. They are constantly employed to denote the death, not of any persons, but of those who die in the LORD. Thus, our SAVIOUR speaking of Lazarus, " Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." Thus of the holy Martyr St. Stephen ; when he had prayed for his murderers, " he fell asleep." Thus St. Paul speaks with horror of some men's notion that there was no resurrection, because in that case it must follow that those who are " fallen asleep in CHRIST are perished." Thus, in another place he assures the Thessalonians, that " those who sleep in JESUS HE will bring with HIM," when HE comes to raise the dead.

Quiet sleep, therefore, is the image of their death, who die as living members of the Holy JESUS : whom the FATHER, therefore, acknowledging them as HIS children, receives at their death into the Everlasting Arms. As for others who have so lived and died, as finally to forfeit their baptismal privileges, and cut themselves off from the Body of CHRIST, no such promise, be sure, belongs to them ; they have their part in a very different text : " The wicked," says the Prophet, " are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked."

Now as all the blessings which we have or hope for, either in this world or in the next, depend on the Passion of our LORD and SAVIOUR, and are to be referred to it ; so this blessing, of laying ourselves down in peace, and taking our rest, whether in our bed or in our grave, seems to bear an especial relation to the mystery of this day, the burial of JESUS CHRIST. By virtue of our heavenly and spiritual union with HIM, our buried LORD, we hope for safe and quiet sleep, after the work and service of each day of our trial, and for a slumber yet safer and quieter, when that trial

is quite over ; a comfortable place in Paradise for our souls, and for our bodies a grave on which God's blessing shall rest. Our warrant for this hope is, that the SON of GOD died for us, bought us to be His own with His precious blood : bought us to be His own in such sort, that we should be really joined to HIM, mystically made members of His Body, and as such have a share, as in His Cross and Passion here, so in the heavenly and eternal good things, wherewith GOD crowned HIM in the world out of sight. As members, inseparable members, of the MAN CHRIST JESUS, we hope to have our bodies buried with HIM ; and for our souls, our true selves, we hope that when they pass away from our bodies, they may be with HIM that day in Paradise.

Except we have this hope in us, I do not see how we can well apply to ourselves the comfortable words of the Psalm. For those words are spoken by David in the person of JESUS CHRIST and His Church, after the manner of most of the Divine Psalms. Whence it follows, that none but members of CHRIST and His Church, properly speaking, have any right to use those words. But *they* may : they may truly say with their LORD, "Thou hast set me at liberty when I was in trouble : " they may complain with HIM of the children of this world, "blaspheming His and their honour, following vanity, seeking after lies ; " and in like manner, as HE said on the Cross, (and they seem to have been His very last words,) "FATHER, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," so they may, every night of their lives, and still more when the night of death draws on, gather and compose all their thoughts and affections into that one most exalting and soothing thought of all, that they are about to fall asleep in His arms, Who long ago, when they were little children, took them up, marked them for His own, and blessed them.

Let us dwell for a while upon this thought, for surely it must do us good, if we really put our minds to it. How is it that in sleep, and still more in death, Christian men may humbly depend on a peculiar presence of our LORD JESUS CHRIST to guard them ?

First, because HE is that King, who has promised to His people Israel, "HE will not suffer thy foot to be moved, and HE that keepeth thee will not sleep. Behold HE that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." CHRIST is the King who makes that

promise, and we are the Israel to whom the promise is made. Whether over His whole Church, or over each member of the same who has not forfeited the blessed privilege, His word stands sure; "The LORD is thy Keeper, the LORD is thy defence on thy right hand, so that the sun shall not burn thee by day, neither the moon by night:" nothing at all shall really hurt thee. And when thou seemest to be most helpless, as in sleep and in death, then is the fatherly care of thy King most engaged to watch over thee, as HE watched when thou wast a child, cast on HIM from the womb, and on thy mother's breasts.

Again; as in every other part of our life,—in all things that we do and suffer—so in this act of laying ourselves down, either to sleep or to die, comes in the remembrance and the power of our LORD's sacrifice. That deep sleep of His, on the Cross and in the grave, hath sanctified and blessed the sleep of all penitent Christians for all time to come, whether in their beds or in the bosom of the earth. Doubt it not, there are angels to watch their graves, as they watched His; so as that not one of their hallowed and purified bodies shall be missing at the last day. And here by the way is one reason more, for dealing more reverentially and cautiously with the tombs of the dead, and the places where they lie, than too many are apt to do.

But in respect of our LORD's Sacrifice, how it makes our sleep quiet we may in some measure understand, by considering what it is which is the great disturber of that sleep: it is Sin, either in itself, or in its punishment—disease and misery. Therefore to know that CHRIST has died for you, and to have a reasonable hope, grounded on a good conscience, that blemished as you are with many infirmities, you have not forfeited the blessing of His death; this is the secret of good nights, truly called such, here, and of a quiet and comfortable death-bed when our time shall come. "Good night," in a Christian's mouth, is a solemn word: it is as much as to say, "May the shadow of the Cross be over you; your sins be forgiven, and you continue a living member of JESUS CHRIST."

Once more; we are taught in Holy Scripture to regard the Holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of CHRIST as one very especial safeguard for the sleeping until they wake, and for the dead until they rise again. In this sense, more particularly, may

it be said to JESUS CHRIST, "Thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety." "For as the FATHER hath life in HIMSELF, so hath HE given to the SON to have life in HIMSELF;" the WORD of GOD made flesh, "the last Adam, is a quickening," a life-giving, "spirit." HE "quickens our" very "mortal bodies, by His SPIRIT that dwelleth in us." Now this blessing, HE HIMSELF assures us, depends on our partaking of His Body and Blood. "Except ye eat the flesh of the SON of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you." And no less clearly has HE assured us, that the Holy Bread and Wine in the Eucharist is His Body and Blood.

It is then in those who worthily receive it, as a seed of heavenly life, whether they wake, or whether they sleep; by virtue of that holy Communion, they are the LORD's. And shall we suppose that its virtue ends, when we go out of this world? Surely the nearer we draw to CHRIST, the more powerfully may we expect His blessed influences to work upon us. And we have warrant of Scripture for our hope. The HOLY GHOST by St. Paul has taught us to think of the burial of a Christian as of sowing seed: sowing that which will indeed outwardly and visibly crumble, decay, and die, but which has yet in it, through all those changes, something which keeps it in a manner alive; which prepares it for a new manifestation of the life that is in it, and a far better one, before long. CHRIST's Body, received as HE has commanded, is to our bodies "a quickening Spirit." "Doth any man doubt," says the excellent Hooker, "but that even from the Flesh of CHRIST our very bodies do receive that life which shall make them glorious at the latter day, and for which they are already accounted parts of His Blessed Body? Our corruptible bodies could never live the life they shall live, were it not that here they are joined with His Body which is incorruptible." If we cannot understand how this should be, neither can we understand how whilst we live we should be truly members of CHRIST, deriving heavenly life from HIM.

To our brethren, therefore, in the grave and in Paradise, no less than to us who are still on earth, we may apply St. Paul's words: "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with CHRIST in God. When CHRIST, who is our life," (theirs and ours alike,) "shall appear, then," and not till then, "shall the clouds roll away, and the

mystery be made plain:" then "shall we," they and we together (for we are not to prevent them); all, I say, together "shall appear with HIM in glory." Till then, it will be all a secret; and as Hooker says again, "The strength of our faith will be tried by those things wherein our wits and capacities are not strong."

Any how, we cannot believe that the heavenly life, in a Christian continuing such to the end, can ever die; since our LORD has expressly said, "I AM the Resurrection and the Life; whosoever believeth in ME, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in ME shall never die." Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "all live unto HIM;" but he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than they; and therefore, if we will speak correctly, no Christian at all can properly be called dead; their bodies, indeed, sleep for a while, but even they have in them the seed of a new life; and their souls are not only living, but in Paradise: that is, in consciousness, hope, and comfort, though not yet in perfect consummation and bliss. And of all this the holy Communion is the seal, conveying to us the benefit of His death, His burial, His descent into Hell, Who is the true and only Cause and Author of all.

And what if the whole be covered, I will not say with clouds and darkness, but with the skirts of that overpowering glory, which will be about our Blessed LORD, when HE shall come at last in our sight? Yet surely the use and comfort of it all is under no cloud, no darkness whatever. Is there a night of our lives, which we might not, if we would, sanctify and bless with this thought; that our lying down to rest is indeed a kind of token, a remembrance and rehearsal of our LORD's burial, as plainly and as certainly as sleep is an image of death; and that we, as members of HIM, may humbly hope for such care over us, both in our beds and in our graves, as guarded His Blessed Body, during this day's brief and mysterious rest? Can we look at a sleeping child, or watch by the slumbers of any one whom we love, or whom we are trusted with, and not enter, however faintly, into the transporting yet awful thought, that every moment of their deep quietness is the fruit of His presence, and the purchase of His blood? Is it no comfort, when we part with a Christian brother or sister, to know that if they were such as they seemed, they really are not dead, no, not for a while: their souls are with CHRIST, and CHRIST

with their bodies in the grave? Is it no gain in our own dying hours, to be rid of perplexing cares and fears, such as even faithful men, wanting these consolations, are apt to be tried with, concerning the condition of our own souls and bodies, between death and resurrection? Finally, is it not one reason more, why the young should make haste to communicate, lest they die without the seed of immortality in them; why those who have begun, should communicate often, to cherish and quicken that spark of divine life; why all should be very much afraid of coming unworthily, lest they stifle and quench it utterly, and depart, after all, not living members of CHRIST?

SERMON CLXXVI.

CHRISTIAN UPRISING.

PREACHED ON EASTER DAY.

PSALM iii. 5.

“ I laid Me down and slept, and rose up again ; for the LORD sustained Me.”

IF Christians would but observe what they read or hear in the Bible, and what they experience in life, and compare diligently the one with the other, they would find that the whole world around them is, in a certain sense, full of divine tokens ; every thing almost would put them in mind, more or less directly, of JESUS CHRIST our SAVIOUR, and they would see that GOD meant it so to do : much in the same way as, when people's hearts are turned any way, towards any thing on earth, with entire affection, whatever they see, hear, or meet with, reminds them, they hardly know how, of that beloved object. Our SAVIOUR, perhaps, meant something of this kind, when HE told His disciples that “ every Scribe instructed into the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, who bringeth out of his treasures things new and old ;” that is, as it has been explained, “ the old things of nature,” and of this world of sight and sense, “ and the new things of grace,” and of the other world, which is only known by faith. A well-instructed Christian heart, HE seems to say, will know how to connect these two one with another ;—will discern what part of GOD's mysterious dealings with us through JESUS CHRIST may be fitly represented as in parable, by the several ways of His Providence, as seen in the things of this world ;—will understand, in short, “ all parables ;” that is CHRIST's own word.

What I mean is not, perhaps, clear : I will try and explain it by some examples. We know that our SAVIOUR is called “the Sun of Righteousness,” “the Dayspring from on high,” and that on that account particular respect has been shown, in various ordinances of the Church Catholic, to the east above all the other quarters of the heaven ; we know that on Christmas-Day that Psalm is used, which speaks of HIM as the Sun coming out of His chamber, like a bridegroom, and “rejoicing as a giant to run His course.” Whoever has considered these things, if he be a true lover of CHRIST, will never be able to see the sun rise, without thinking of HIM who is the true light of the world ; and thus so common a thing as the sunrise, a thing which must happen every day so long as the world lasts, is made a token,—the old Christians would call it a sacrament,—of a great mystery of divine faith and salvation.

The sun rising in the east is nature’s token, to remind us of Christmas-Day ; and here in the text, if we consider it well, we find a no less clear token of the mysteries of this solemn time of Easter : our LORD dying and rising again. “I laid me down and slept, and rose up again, for the LORD sustained me :” once let it be well understood that the Psalms all relate to JESUS CHRIST, to His Church, and to His Members, and it will be very clear that this verse, plain and simple as it sounds, contains a deep mystery also. If the Person who speaks is JESUS CHRIST, no doubt His lying down is His death upon the Cross, His sleep is the rest which HE took, from Friday evening to Sunday morning, in the sepulchre, which Joseph’s faithful love had provided for HIM : His rising up again is that glorious awaking, and bursting of the bonds of death, which makes the Church joyful this day, and every Sunday in the year.

Neither is it any thing new, to have such a verse as this applied to the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of our LORD. The old Fathers and Bishops so explained it from the very beginning of the Church ; and one of them in particular, would have us observe the particular stress to be laid on the word “I” in this verse. It so stands in the Hebrew language, in which David spake by the HOLY GHOST, as to mean “I myself” and no other, I of mine own accord and free will, “laid me down and slept, and rose up again ; for the LORD sustained ME.” Thus it sig-

nifies our LORD's own voluntary consent and purpose, in all that happened to HIM; according to that saying of His, "Therefore doth My FATHER love ME, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from ME, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. Not against Mine own will, therefore, did you seize and slay ME; but it was I who laid ME down, slept so long as I pleased, and rose up again when I would."

Thus speaks the holy Bishop St. Augustin of the meaning of this Psalm. Upon his authority, and that of the whole Church, we conclude that the words, "I laid ME down and slept, and rose up again," plain and simple as they sound, contain in them a great mystery, the beginning and end of a Christian's hope, the death and resurrection of JESUS CHRIST.

And surely we do well to connect that mystery with our own lying down and rising up, as often as night and morning return. Sleep, to all men, even to the heathen and unbeliever, has always seemed an image of death; to a Christian it is an image of the death of CHRIST; and not only an image, but a token from above, a sign and pledge from the Truth itself, that HE died, and died for us. Rising again in the morning may be to Jews or Heathens a ground of hope, that *possibly, for aught they know*, God may provide for us even after death: but to Christian people it is as a word from Heaven, a promise and warning, though a silent one, that by the virtue of HIM who is the Resurrection and the Life, we, too, shall rise again; we shall but sleep in our graves, and never really die. In a word, our daily lying down and rising up is given us for a sacramental sign and pledge of CHRIST's death and resurrection, and of our own.

Thus we see that Christmas and Easter have each their outward and visible sign, something to remind us of them, in the common course of life, which every one of us has to go through continually. Whitsuntide, too, has its own proper token, chosen out among natural things, and assigned to it by the highest of all authorities; but I will not say more of that until the time comes. At present the season itself leads us to consider, what use we should make of the mystery of our own sleep and awakening, taught as we are by Scripture and the Church the high things which are betokened therein.

I say, the *Mystery* of our daily sleep and awakening ; for, little as we are apt to reflect on it, surely these things are in themselves as mysterious as any thing can be. Who knows any thing about his own dropping asleep ? It comes on like the dew from Heaven, without any consciousness of ours at the time, neither do we remember any thing of it when we wake up again. It leaves us, to all appearance, perfectly helpless, exposed to every danger and enemy ; we can do nothing for ourselves, no more than a child just born, no more than a corpse from which the life has departed : so that, as I have somewhere read, it seems probable that when the first man began to fall asleep for the first time after his creation, he might well think he was going to melt away, and pass altogether out of being.

Thus our falling asleep is a *Mystery*, a thing which takes place we know not how, a thing out of our own power, as much so as death itself ; and then what becomes of us during our sleep ? where is that gone which was just before so active within us, our mind, heart, and soul, a few minutes ago so full of thought and life and feeling ? where is it gone ? how is it employed ? what happens to it ? what are those dim and unaccountable and shadowy thoughts, which so often seem to engage it, in what we call dreams ? And more especially, how and why does it come back ? who fixes the time, who gives the signal, who furnishes us with the power to wake up all of a sudden, and be our former selves again ?

All these things have befallen us, every time we have slept and awakened, from our birth even until now : and which of us all knows really more about them, or can explain them better, than he could the first hour he was born ? To the simplest child alike, and to the wisest man, it is a great and inconceivable mystery, how all this comes to pass ; how he lies down and becomes so helpless and unconscious, and passes for awhile out of himself, and then rises up alive and the same, only strengthened and refreshed, in mind as well as body, by having, in appearance, lost all power for a time.

When we duly consider this, it may help us to believe, though of course we never shall be able in this world to understand, how that longer sleep, which we call Death, may come on us we know not how, and leave our bodies without power or thought for awhile,

our souls in the mean time departing we know not where, and employed we know not how, and yet we continuing the same persons that we were, and sure, by and by, to be wakened up, and find ourselves again the same, our souls again joined to our bodies, and all our thoughts and powers in a wonderful manner quickened, made more active and wakeful than ever, so as even to endure an eternity of pain or enjoyment, without ever ceasing to feel, or losing our consciousness, as we now do in sleep, any more. HE who can do the one of these miracles in us, can doubtless do the other, if HE will. The LORD who hath sustained us so often when we lay down and slept, and caused us to rise again in safety; HE can sustain us in like manner through the sleep of death. And HE *will* do so, for His sure word is given. "All that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."

But further; it may be that there is a still higher and more awful depth of Mystery in the Psalmist's words, spoken as they are in His Person, who is both GOD and MAN. It is as if we heard CHRIST HIMSELF, risen from the tomb, and saying, "I laid me down and slept, and rose up again: for the LORD sustained me." Doubtless the LORD sustained the INCARNATE SON through those hours of death and burial, in a different sense, an infinitely deeper and higher sense, than as HE sustains the ordinary children of men, either in sleep, against their awakening, or in death, against their resurrection. The LORD, the most High and glorious God-head, still in our SAVIOUR'S Person, inseparably joined to His human Soul and Body, even while the one was in the grave, and the other in Paradise, or elsewhere in the regions of the dead,—HE still continued the same CHRIST, very GOD and very MAN, and by virtue of that ETERNAL SPIRIT, HE raised HIMSELF from the dead when His time was come. So that it may and must be said, that the MOST HIGH GOD died and was buried, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead, yet all the while abiding unchanged in His eternal glory and tranquillity, above the heavens and the heaven of heavens.

This we must own and confess with adoring hearts, for this the Word of God, written in His book, and entrusted to His Church, plainly teaches; and what if it seem to us inconceivable? Surely

what happens in our own sleeping and waking would seem to us no less inconceivable, if it were only described to us, and we had no experience of it. Let us not, therefore, make any question about it, but rather in silence bow down, and admire that unspeakable love, which for our sake devised how to bring the very depth and height of all things together ; that the LORD of GLORY should lie in the grave, and a crucified Man be over all, blessed for ever.

And let us take notice what gracious help is afforded, to those who are willing so to lift up their hearts, by CHRIST's making so common a matter as our daily sleep and awakening a token and sign of this most awful Mystery. As often as the morning comes, and God's Providence arouses us out of our slumbers, it is, if we will but so take it, a token and remembrance from HIM, of His having once lain in the grave for us, and raised HIMSELF again by the power of His indwelling Godhead. "The LORD sustained HIM;" His own divine power kept up, even in the grave, that union of God and Man, which HE had once for all begun in the womb of the Blessed Virgin.

This is, perhaps, more than any thing else, the immediate and direct meaning of this saying in the Psalm. It speaks of our LORD's own Body : but see what follows from it, with regard to all of us His people, members of that Body which was so laid in the grave. Of us too, surely, the word is spoken : the LORD, that is, CHRIST dwelling in us, will sustain us also when we lie down and sleep. We are made members of HIM by holy baptism ; HE then justifies us, coming to dwell mysteriously but really in our souls and bodies, making us temples of the LIVING GOD : as says the evangelical Psalm, "Thou hast received gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also, that the LORD GOD might dwell among them:" and it is His will from time to time to perfect and repair that union and indwelling, by the Holy Sacrament of his own body and blood : as HE HIMSELF declared, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in ME, and I in him."

Doubt it not, my Christian brethren ; CHRIST is in the meanest, the least of His people, as a lifegiving Spirit, a fountain of eternal life : and if it be life eternal, will it leave a man when his time comes to die, and be turned again to his dust ? No : it will not leave him ; to God he will still live, if he die in faith : even

in the grave, he will abide a Member of CHRIST. He may lie down and sleep, and seem alone and helpless, but he has That within him which still sustains him, still keeps him in true communion with GOD.

The LORD is with him in the grave and in Paradise ; therefore he is not really dead, but sleepeth, and is sure to rise again in glory. And so that is fulfilled in all obedient Christians, which our SAVIOUR promised to Martha, and which HE promises anew to us every time we attend a funeral : “ I am the Resurrection and the Life,” saith the LORD : “ he that believeth in ME, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in ME shall never die.” HE does not say “ shall die and rise again,” but “ shall never die :” though he be what men call dead, to GOD he is really living : his faith keeps up his communion with JESUS CHRIST, dwelling in him to be his life and righteousness ; therefore, in fact, he never dies.

Such, Christian brethren, are the high and unspeakable privileges of all whom CHRIST has made Members of HIMSELF, so long as they keep their promise and vow made in Baptism. It is not simply that they lie down at night on their beds at peace with GOD and with man, and take their rest quietly, in the strength of a good conscience, and rise in the morning and go about their day's work, in the sweet and comfortable hope that the All-seeing GOD is with them, to bless and support them. Nor is it only that when they lie down to die, they may without presumption look forward in their hearts to a blessed Resurrection hereafter. There is another thing yet better and higher than both of these ; namely, that CHRIST, even now abiding in them, makes them already in this world partakers of a heavenly and divine life. He sustains them sleeping and waking, in life and in death, in their beds and in their graves ; for in both conditions they are alike Members of HIM. Dying, they partake of His Cross and Passion, and they are to rise again, and live for ever, in virtue of His glorious and happy Resurrection.

But all this, as I said before, depends on our keeping our baptismal vows ; or, if we have unhappily broken them by wilful sin, on our recovering our spiritual health by a deep, true, and timely repentance : a repentance, earnest and laborious in proportion to our fall. This should be the one business of the life of every one

of CHRIST's people, the only subject of the advice of His Ministers. CHRIST has united you once for all, to HIMSELF; persevere, if you have not fallen; if you have, recover.

Now what the means are of recovery or perseverance, we must ask every man his own conscience, and the Word and Church of God: I will now only just mention one or two of the chief rules, which all alike have need to remember.

First; since it is CHRIST only who sustains us, whether in our lying down, or sleeping, or rising up, how dare any of us lie down or rise up without solemnly committing himself to CHRIST, on his knees, in devout prayer? If our falling asleep and waking are so like death and resurrection, and if we would not willingly die without a little leisure to make our peace with God, why do we not make leisure for our confessions, every night before we sleep? Why do we not even force ourselves to keep awake, until we have with all seriousness asked pardon for the past, and help and grace for the future? If we are crucified and risen again with CHRIST, surely it is unnatural for us either to sleep or wake without earnest thought of CHRIST.

Private devotion, then, punctual prayer in CHRIST's Name, not carelessly done, but as a solemn service, and if health permit, on our knees, must be one great help, towards saving or recovering the heavenly life, which our LORD offers to sustain in us.

Another, no less needful one, is the Holy Communion of His Body and Blood. This is the Sacrament of Perseverance and Growth in Grace, as Baptism is of Repentance and Regeneration. The heavenly life, which CHRIST has begun in us, can be sustained in no other way, besides that which HE has appointed. What way is that? Let His own words answer: "Except ye eat the Flesh of the SON of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you." The Holy Sacrament then of the Eucharist, received if possible early in life, and when, once received never given up, is the best medicine to sustain us in death and resurrection. It is the very seed of eternal life within us: as our LORD says again in the same awful discourse, "Whoso eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath" (not "will have" but "hath") "eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." And again, "As the Living FATHER hath sent ME, and I live by the FATHER, so he that eateth ME, even he shall live by ME."

Prayer, then, and the Holy Communion are necessary to all ; and deep, hearty, painful Compunction, not passing away as fear or anger might, but continuing, is no less needful to as many of us as have ever wilfully broken our baptismal vow. We must never be content with our past repentance, and think, because our grief then was sincere, the sin so repented of is blotted out, clean, out of God's book, and become as if it had never been. Rather, as men come to know more of God and goodness, they will be the more grieved and angry with themselves, will entertain the graver thoughts of their own past transgressions.

Let us not fear then to vex and punish ourselves, that we do not so entirely and bitterly repent, as we ought and wish to do. Let us cordially beseech God, after the example of holy Bishop Wilson, to make the remembrance of our sins more grievous to us than it is. Let some of our first waking thoughts, and of our last before we sleep, be of our own great unworthiness. Sinners as we are all, most of us backsliders, let us neither confidently look for, nor talk as if we had, assurance and entire satisfaction. Let us pray and labour to have this one sign of His pardon, that we grow daily more diligent in pleasing HIM ; and so much comfortable hope withal, as HE shall see needful for our doing the work HE has assigned to us. For the rest, as we are, nightly content to lie down and sleep, trusting our bodies with our CREATOR, although we must be more or less uncertain whether we shall ever wake again ; so let us make up our minds, if it be His will, to go on doubting and fearing, more or less, even to the end ; doubting and fearing, what manner of persons we are in the sight of our Judge and REDEEMER. It will be a wholesome doubt, a strengthening fear, if it make us more afraid of sin, more diligent in keeping the commandments.

S E R M O N C L X X V I I .

CHRIST THE KING OF ANGELS.

PREACHED ON ASCENSION-DAY.

I ST. PETER iii. 22.

“ Who is gone into Heaven, and is on the right hand of GOD; Angels and Authorities and Powers being made subject unto HIM.”

IT is most certain that, when we have done our best, we cannot lift up our minds and hearts fully to understand the unspeakable glory which the SON of GOD, as HE is also SON of MAN, obtained as on this day: when HE, who a little more than forty days before had been a worm and no man, a very scorn of men and the out-cast of the people, was “ set at His FATHER’s right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that also which is to come, and had all things put under His feet, and was given to be head over all things.” We cannot, I say, realize this in our thoughts, even as we cannot know or imagine the place where the visible though spiritual Body of our Blessed LORD now is, or how, or which way, HE was received up through the air when HE hid HIMSELF in a cloud from the sight of His servants, they stedfastly looking after HIM.

They saw HIM departing, yet could they no more imagine the manner of His departure than we now can. But did that hinder them from musing and meditating upon it? Nay, their very hearts and minds went after HIM, and did in a manner continually

dwell with HIM. "They worshipped HIM, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God." CHRIST ascended into Heaven took up their thoughts day and night: they were never satisfied with the wondering and adoring remembrance of it, and with hymning and praising the ALMIGHTY for that last and greatest of miracles. But did they think of it only as a miracle; or were not their thoughts rather taken up with the portion which they themselves had in it, and all whom CHRIST came to save?

We indeed are but little able to enter into the thoughts of Apostles, of the favoured friends of JESUS CHRIST, accustomed to His Divine words and looks, when they saw HIM in His very Body, His Crucified Body, ascending up into Heaven. But we may understand that this was a part of their feelings; that now One, who is true Man as we are,—who can enter into our joys and sorrows, our hopes and fears,—HE is set in the highest place, over all created things. And HE carries with HIM there the same tender love towards the meanest of His faithful servants which HE ever vouchsafed to exercise here. HE still loves to be called on by the afflicted with earnest and most persevering prayer. HE is ready, as of old, to reply to the woman of Canaan, "O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt." There are still families which HE loves with distinguishing and peculiar love,—as he loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus; and there are graves beside which HE waits, as HE did by that of Lazarus, in deep and tender pity for the sorrows of those who are tried by separation and bereavement.

His going up into Heaven was to the Apostles, who remembered these things, a sign that though absent from us visibly in the Body, HE would yet be (if I may say so) more present than ever in Spirit with the children of men, in all their cares, and griefs and anxieties. It was a sign of "the MANHOOD" being so "taken into God," that HE would always (so to speak) be on our side, in all our struggles and conflicts, spiritual and temporal, if only we do not cast HIM from us.

It was, in some sort, as if one's nearest and dearest relation were made absolute king of the country. If persons who care for earthly things would rejoice in such a change as that, and consider their own fortune made, how much more joy to those

who care for heavenly things, when we set our hearts to consider that HE Who "is not ashamed to call us brethren," HE Who loved us so well that HE laid down His life for us in torment, HE is made the Great King in Heaven and Earth, and has all the treasures of grace and glory put for ever into His hand.

In this, we see at once, is included every good thing. But for the present there is one blessing in particular on which I wish to say a few words. It is, the subjection of the spiritual world to our SAVIOUR, expressed by St. Peter in the words of the text, that "Angels and Authorities and Powers were made subject" to the SON OF MAN when HE went into Heaven, and sat down on the right hand of God. That is to say, that not only the things which we see, the sun, and moon, and stars, the earth and the waters, the bodies of men, their health and sickness, and all that we call the course of this world, is under the command of His Eternal Providence, Who is pledged to make all things work together for good to them that love HIM; but also the worlds out of sight, the spiritual and heavenly world, is entirely ordered by HIM.

Now, this is a great thing for us to know; a great comfort in our natural fears and misgivings; a great encouragement to well-doing; and a most serious warning against all carelessness and sin.

We naturally think, even from our childhood—at least, all thoughtful children think—a good deal of the spiritual world: of beings out of sight, who yet, for aught we know, may often be very near us, and may have great power to do us good, or to hurt us in body and soul. What are the many stories and imaginations about spirits appearing, and tokens from unseen beings, and the like, of which most of us have at times heard so much; what are they all, but signs that we feel how many things are about us which we do not see? They are providential ways of instructing us, how fearful it would be were our eyes suddenly opened; and how greatly, therefore, we need some assurance that we are not left alone and helpless, in regard of this unseen world, any more than in regard of that world, which we discern by our bodily senses, and which therefore seems nearer to us.

Now the Ascension of our LORD is such a token: it assures us, that however deep our solitude, however overpowering our sense

of spiritual beings possibly near us, One is at hand like-minded with ourselves, Who can pity all our misgivings, as well as protect us in all dangers. In darkness as in light, in desolation as in pleasant places, in melancholy as in cheerful hours, HE is still the same. Could we but bring home to ourselves His most mysterious, but most certain Presence, we need not "be afraid for any terror by night," any more than "for the arrow that flieth by day." The whole world unseen, we are sure, is under HIM, no less than the world which we see. And committing ourselves to HIM by serious prayer, will ever be as effectual a safeguard against the unknown dangers of our spiritual Being, as against those of our natural Being, which we can in some measure understand and foresee. Thus the Disciples found JESUS at hand to relieve them, as certainly, when supposing HIM to be a Spirit, they "cried out for fear," as when in the violent storm on the same lake, they woke HIM with the appeal, "Lord save us! we perish."

Consider the matter in this way. The Bible teaches that there are two worlds, in the midst of which we all live, did we but know it, and remember it; the one visible, the other invisible: and that there are in the invisible world two sorts of Angels, Authorities and Powers, with both of which we are concerned; with the one, as friends and fellow-servants; with the other, as unrelenting enemies. And the thought of our LORD gone up into Heaven, and sitting on the right hand of GOD, is a thought of great power to set us right in our feelings towards both these awful sorts of Beings.

Consider, first, what a thing it is to know that the good Angels are on our side: that they camp about us to deliver us: that as CHRIST Himself in His distress had but to pray to His FATHER, and HE would presently have given HIM more than twelve legions of Angels, so the members of CHRIST, in their several agonies of body and mind, have but to pray to the ALMIGHTY, and who knows but the same Holy Messengers, most likely unknown to them, will receive some commission to do them good? As they came to Daniel, to shut the lions' mouths; as they were like an army with horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha; as they opened the prison doors of Jerusalem, and let out first all the Apostles, then St. Peter, on the eve of martyrdom; as in the Book of Revelation they are introduced continually,

helping the Saints in their prayers, assuring them of blessings, taking their side in their warfare with the world: even so it is now.

In these instances, there is no doubt of the Angelical ministry and help: but these are but a few out of many beyond number. In these, the Powers of Heaven showed themselves: but in fact, they are continually acting, continually ministering to such as shall be heirs of salvation. So the prayer of Elisha runs: "LORD," (he does not say, "Send Thine Angel and deliver us," but what he says is,) "Open the eyes of this young man, that he may see:" as though he might have seen the same at any time, if he would but have opened his eyes.

What a view does this present, of the unspeakably watchful and tender care of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, over the very humblest and meanest of His servants! that the whole army of Angels and Archangels, all the Hosts of the LORD, are set in array for each one of our defence and salvation: ready and glad to refresh us, the Members of CHRIST, as they did HIM who is our Head, after great and sore temptation: to prompt those who wait on us with thoughts for our good, as the Angel that spake to Joseph in a dream: to strengthen us in agony, as he who appeared to our LORD in the garden: to remove difficulties, and declare good tidings; as he who rolled away the stone, and declared, "The LORD is risen." This certainty of Angelical aid, so far as we are on CHRIST's side, we have by His Exaltation into Heaven, and the subjection to HIM of Angels, Authorities and Powers.

But those words, doubtless, mean the evil Angels as well as the good; our unseen enemies, as well as our unseen friends. And is it not worth a great deal to know, that the power of our SAVIOUR is over them also,—His restraining power, to keep them from harming us,—as His gracious encouraging power is with the good Angels, commissioning them to help us to all kinds of blessings? Of this, also, there were wonderful tokens given in the course of our LORD's abode on the Earth: first and chiefly, in the Temptation, when HE overcame Satan in the wilderness; and afterwards in the power which HE continually exercised over the unclean Spirits, not only casting them out HIMSELF, but giving power to His Disciples to do the same. And in one very particular instance, HE

showed us something of the unseen dangers to which we should be continually exposed, in body and estate as well as in spirit, were it not for His continual care to bind Satan, and keep him in chains. The instance I mean is that of the legion of devils, who were driven out of the men possessed with them, and permitted to take possession of a herd of swine; "and behold, the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters."

By this we see what would become of us, if God were to take off the chain, with which Satan, since CHRIST's coming in the flesh, has been more than ever bound. We see that there are bad Angels, powers of mischief and darkness, waiting around us on every side, ready to hurry us away into utter destruction both of soul and body, the moment that HE in His anger shall let them loose. It is the power of our LORD CHRIST, sitting at His FATHER's Right Hand, that binds them. It is HE who says to them, Thus far shalt thou go, and no further. Without His permission, we see, they could not hurt so much as a herd of swine; with it, the single case of Job shows, how they may vex and torment even good men; and the case of Judas shows still more fearfully what they are allowed to do with the bad, and with those who will not take CHRIST's warnings.

And, both as to good and bad Angels, we must remember that what they do to us in this world is but a faint type and shadow of what we may expect from them in the world to come: in that last great day, when the one shall gather together God's elect like wheat into His barn; the other shall be cast, with all impenitent sinners, into the lake of everlasting fire.

In these awful and overpowering reflections, let this be our stay and our warning: that in the world of Angels as well as of men, CHRIST ascended into Heaven is supreme, and that HE has promised to order and direct their power, and even the malice of the bad ones, so as may best work for the good of them that love HIM. Nay, His Holy Scriptures teach that we, being united to HIM by His HOLY SPIRIT, are in some mysterious way ascended into Heaven with HIM; therefore we, through HIM, except we have lost our hold of HIM by our sins, have power to resist and overcome the bad spirits, and are permitted to depend on the succour and protection of the good.

These thoughts are not mere imaginations : they are great and true realities. They are true and real at all times : only, while we are in light and company, they are harder for us fully to receive. But in a few hours we shall be in the darkness ; our day's work will be over ; we shall be more alone, and more at leisure to think. Let us recall to our minds, then, what we have been taught of the Presence of the two sorts of Angels. Let us then fancy to ourselves the evil and unclean spirits lying in wait near our beds, ready to vex us with all sorts of bad thoughts, and to torment our very bodies, if God would give them leave. Such imaginations are painful and distressing ; yet let us not turn away from them, till they have filled us with a real fear of consenting to any bad thought, for that is the only way in which we can give those evil companions power over us.

Let us not try to put out of our minds the notion of the bad Angels being around us, until we have turned in serious prayer to HIM Who for our sake holds them in chains. Imagine CHRIST our LORD on His Throne, to which HE this day ascended : imagine HIM, how His Eye is ever fixed, both on you in your helpless slumbering condition, and on your adversary waiting to hurt you. And be sure, that if before you lay down you seriously and reverently committed yourself to HIM in prayer, with sincere penitence for all your sins, HE will not let the roaring lion devour you. You may, without presumption, imagine HIM, then, saying to some of His good Angels, " Here is one who lay down to rest, desiring to dwell under the defence of the MOST HIGH ; here is one who hath sought, day and night, to abide under the shadow of the ALMIGHTY ; he hath set his love upon ME, and tried to know My Name ; therefore do you, My good Angels, take charge of him, and keep him from the evil that walketh in darkness." And you may imagine that charge especially given to that one among the good Spirits, who was set to watch over you at first, on your becoming one of CHRIST's little ones. And you may thankfully muse on the joy, with which those blessed Spirits set about their loving task, and how it pleases them to cherish in you every good and wholesome thought ; and how the tempter, finding you so well guarded, will depart, gnashing his teeth for disappointment, and leave you to your quiet slumber.

Such is the comfortable hope with which a penitent, believing person may lie down in sleep, yea, even in death, ever since JESUS CHRIST went into Heaven, and the Angels, Authorities and Powers were made subject unto Him. I say, a penitent, believing, obedient person. For all these blessings depend on our keeping our hold of CHRIST; and that depends on our sincerely trying to obey HIM, in thought, word, and deed.

SERMON CLXXVIII.

ONE SPIRIT, MANY GIFTS.

FOR WHIT-MONDAY.

I COR. xii. 11.

“ But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as HE will.”

ON the first Whit-Sunday, that is, about one thousand eight hundred years ago, that great wonder of God's mercy began to take place, of which the Apostle in these words, as every where else in his writings, declares the continuance. The twelve Apostles, with the holy and blessed Virgin Mother, and with the other devout women from Galilee, in short, all the followers of our LORD, being “ with one accord in one place,” in the upper room, no doubt, where they had ever since His Ascension continued to meet in prayer and supplication, “ suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting ;” it seemed to be on all sides of them at once : “ and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the HOLY GHOST.”

One and the same SPIRIT filled them all, and all began to speak with other languages ; not all alike, but as the SPIRIT gave them power to speak. Thus was fulfilled for the first time, to the very eye and ear, that of which the Apostle in the text speaks, as a law of God's kingdom to be continued for ever. There were “ diversities of gifts, but the same SPIRIT.” It was one fire, but separated

into many tongues: one sound, as of a rushing mighty wind, but different in tone, when they spake, according to each man's voice. One man spake one language, another another, but it was the same HOLY GHOST that put words in the mouths of all. And all spake the same thing,—“the wonderful works of God,”—His marvellous mercies by JESUS CHRIST, His Son, made Man, crucified, risen, and glorified, for the salvation of the world.

As it was thus in the beginning of the Church, so it continued to be afterwards. The Holy Comforter came down, as CHRIST had promised, upon one Christian after another, uniting every one to JESUS CHRIST, and giving every one such gifts as HE knew to be best for him: as it is said in a verse a little before the text, “The manifestation of the SPIRIT is given to every man to profit withal.”

But now these best gifts of God, as well as all His other gifts, are in danger of being profaned by men. And it seems that the Corinthians did profane them. They employed the power of speaking new languages, as well as other spiritual gifts, to their own glory, and not to God's glory alone. Those who had the higher and more abundant gifts, were tempted to think lightly of those who had less; and these again to be discontented and slothful, and think they had no occasion to try their best for GOD's sake. Just as rich men are in danger of permitting themselves to look down upon the poor, and poor men to envy the rich. To correct this, St. Paul would have all Christians remember these two things: first, that all Christians are one in CHRIST; secondly, that each one has his own work, his own place, his own character. Much in the same way “as the body” of a man “is one, and hath many members:” it is not one member, but many; “and all those members, being many, are but one body: so also,” he saith, “is CHRIST.” His mystical Body, the Church, is like His natural Body, or any of our bodies, in respect that although it is made up of many members, each having its own office, yet it is truly, strictly, mysteriously One.

What makes it one, and binds it together, is the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD dwelling in each person's soul and body, to unite him truly to JESUS CHRIST: just as what unites the hands, feet, and other limbs, into one living and moving body, is the life which was breathed into them by ALMIGHTY GOD. “By one SPIRIT,”

the Apostle tells us, " we are all baptized into one Body, whether we be Jew or Gentile, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one SPIRIT."

Thus are Christians put in mind of the one Church, to which all alike belong; and they are also put in mind of the diversity of gifts, whereby each member is made different from another. As in the epistle to the Ephesians, " There is one Body and one SPIRIT, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;" " but to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the Gift of CHRIST." The eye, the ear, the hand, the foot, have their several offices in the body; so have different Christians in the Church. Each is to be pleased and content with his own, yet without looking down upon any other. Each is to do his own work, without either despising or coveting the other's work. This is what St. Paul goes on to teach at large.

First, to the weaker and less honourable members he says, You are not to be cast down nor discontented, as if no one cared for you, because others have higher places than you. " If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body?" The meaning of which is, Suppose you are a poor person, of little understanding or instruction, and altogether in a low place among Christians; you will be apt sometimes to say to yourself, " What signifies what the like of me says or does? Who minds me? If I were a scholar, and had abundance of leisure to acquaint myself with it all; if I were a rich person, and had many others depending upon me; then it would be of more consequence how I went on: but what difference can it make now?" In this way, or something like it, I imagine, people are not seldom tempted to make themselves easy, neglecting divine worship, the Church and the Scriptures, the thought of God and another world, because they are poor and needy, and much taken up with some hard work. This is just what St. Paul describes. For the poor or the ignorant person to give himself up, as though it were useless for him to try to serve God, is as if the foot should say, " Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body;" or as if the ear should say, " Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body."

"Nay," it might be said, "you surely have in you the same life, the same blood, that any other limbs of the body have. The pulse which beats in you comes from the heart, the power and will which guides you from the head; you are as much a member of the Man as any of the limbs which are most precious. If you hear instead of speaking, if you move instead of ruling, if you act instead of ordering, you are not therefore the less parts of the body."

So, should any weaker Christian, giving way to discontent, become careless about his duty, because he has but a low place in the Church, and imagines himself to be thought little of, the Scripture seems to say to such an one, Know yourself better, think more worthily of God's great mercies towards you. Remember the very first lesson you learned in your Catechism, that you were made in your christening a member of CHRIST, a partaker, by His SPIRIT, of the heavenly life; do not for a moment believe that HE can despise or neglect any of His Members. We feel it all over, if any the smallest portion of our bodies is but for a little while in sharp pain: and can it be that HE who came down from Heaven to find and save us when we were lost, HE who has joined us to His very heart,—has become Bone of our bone, and Flesh of our flesh,—can it be that HE should not feel what happens to any one of His Members? "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet cannot I forget thee." These are the promises with which Christians should console themselves, when they feel low and desolate; when in their affliction it almost seems to them as if both God and man had forsaken them.

And much more should we quiet with the same gracious words all discontented and envious thoughts. Are you not a Member of CHRIST, a child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven? and what is it, in comparison of so great mercies, if another man is more learned, more respected, richer, or healthier than you are? God hath set us with other members in the body, every one as it pleased HIM: enough for our happiness, and infinitely more than we deserve, that we are, any of us, there at all.

The weak then are not to envy the strong, and the strong on the other hand are not to despise the weak. "The eye is not

to say to the hand, I have no need of thee ; neither again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." Those who are above others, either in learning or in dignity, are of course in some danger of becoming proud and contemptuous. Therefore the Gospel so distinctly says to us all, "blessed are they that mourn : " blessed are the poor, blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and cast out your name as evil. CHRIST says that the Gospel was especially preached to the poor, and that not the wisest and most honoured, but the humblest, shall be great in the kingdom of Heaven. And again, since all Christians make one body, which is CHRIST, and the Members of the same body feel of course one for another, it never will do for any Christian to deal scornfully with any other Christian. We know that in the natural body, "if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; and if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." Violent pain in any one limb hinders the whole body from being at ease : if the foot or the hand be throbbing with anguish, the eye cannot take rest ; and, on the other hand, if the aching eye, or any other member, be relieved, it will give soothing and relief to the whole body in every part. Thus does ALMIGHTY GOD instruct us by our own constant feelings, how near every Christian is to every other Christian : how we should sympathize all in one another's welfare, should rejoice and sorrow with our neighbour, how far soever he may seem beneath us in any respect. Be he who he may, CHRIST died for him, and as a Christian he is partaker of CHRIST'S SPIRIT. We cannot say, we have no need of him : we need his prayers as much as he ours. Our LORD and SAVIOUR had need of him, for HE came down from Heaven to save him, and gave him His SPIRIT to make him a child of GOD ; and if we think we can do without our brother, if we permit ourselves to scorn him, how have we the Mind of CHRIST ?

Let this then, Christian brethren, be the lesson settled in our hearts at this great and holy time ; to believe that we are Christian brethren indeed, and to cherish in our hearts true brotherly feeling one towards another. The Coming of GOD, the HOLY GHOST, from Heaven, to dwell in our hearts and bodies, and unite us to JESUS CHRIST, is so great, so vast an event, that it

may well overwhelm and confound our minds, if we try to think of it all at once, and to feel all we might and ought from it: it is well that we should select some one point of what it teaches, and meditate on it with all our hearts: and let this our subject to-day be, The **One HOLY SPIRIT**, with His differing gifts, abiding alike in every Member of **CHRIST**.

Consider, what a fearful notion this gives us of our condition. To know that we are in **God's** sight, that **HE** looks on our heart, is exceedingly awful: to know that **HE** looks on us as persons whom **HE** has called to be His own, whom **HE** bought with His own blood, and for whom, therefore, **HE** cares with especial care, this makes our case still more serious: but to be aware that the **MOST HIGH and HOLY SPIRIT**, by the Covenant of our Baptism, is really abiding within us: that we are, as **St. Paul** said, the Temple of **God**, and that the **SPIRIT of God** dwelleth in us:—this, indeed, is awful beyond all awfulness. How can we be idle, thoughtless, negligent of our souls; how can we deal lightly with any duty; above all, how can we pollute our souls and bodies with any kind of wilful sin? we, to whom **CHRIST** has said, “I will pray the **FATHER**, and **HE** shall give you another **COMFORTER**, and **HE** shall abide with you for ever.”

Now, then, with this deep faith in **CHRIST'S HOLY SPIRIT**, as having really been given to dwell in our hearts, let us think on any other person, whomsoever we will, as being also partakers of the same **SPIRIT**. Consider; if he were partaker of the same blood with us, if it were our brother or sister after the flesh, should we not be full of love for him? should we not look on all he did with indulgence, judge him as favourably as we could, pray for a blessing on him heartily, and seek his good always? How much more, when the very same **SPIRIT**, which is our Life, is his Life also; binding us to him by the same kind of Unity, by which the **SON of God** is one with the **FATHER**: for so **HE HIMSELF** prayed: “That they,” that is all Christians, “may be One, as We are.”

Again, because this **SPIRIT** deals not with all exactly alike, but divides to every man severally as **HE** will, how should the remembrance of **HIM** fail to make us content in our places, orderly and diligent in our duties? since wherever we are in **God's** work, **HE**

assigned us our place: whatever we have to do, HE set us our task; if we seem to have to do nothing, but only to suffer, still it was HE who laid the burthen upon us.

Are you then a rich and prosperous person? do not trust in your own riches: beware of thinking that you can do without the poor, that you need them not. You cannot do without them: you have the greatest need of them: you need their prayers and blessings in return for your alms, to guard you against the deadly snare of setting your heart upon this world, or any thing in it. If your alms obtain you the prayers of the poor, this will, very likely, by GOD's mercy through CHRIST, be a means of delivering your soul from death.

Are you, on the contrary, a poor man? Then beware how you allow yourself to think sadly on the rich, as being better off than you are. Such thoughts are too likely to end in repining and envy: and therefore we should never use ourselves to meditate much on men's being above us,—on their having more grace, for example, on their being enabled to do greater things for GOD,—without deeply meditating also on the mysterious ever-present SPIRIT, by Whom such differences were made. When it comes into your mind, "How far such an one is from the wants and doubts and troubles which annoy me," do not stop there, lest you begin to grudge him his tranquillity; but go on saying to yourself, "GOD, Who knows and loves us all better than we do ourselves, HE saw fit to make this difference between my brother and myself, in just judgment, perhaps, for my sins; it is His doing, I dare not dispute or complain of it."

Again, are you in comparison learned? are you able to read the Scriptures? yet do not trust in your reading: do not think that you can make out your duty, and save yourself well enough: you still need the prayers of CHRIST's afflicted and poor, you still need Communion with His Saints, both living and dead: seek that blessing in all charity.

Are you, on the other hand, an ignorant person, and does it mortify you to see and feel that you know much less than most others? care not for it, but turn your thoughts to the infinite and wonderful truth, which, as we all know, belongs to us and to the very wisest alike: turn your thoughts to the HOLY GHOST

abiding in you : it will be a wonder if you still go on envying and repining.

Are you so far blameless, as to have kept, by God's mercy, your soul and body from wilful deadly sin ? You know it is altogether the work of God's SPIRIT : believe and think of this ; it will keep you from pride and self-righteousness.

And last, and most mournful of all, are you a guilty person, your conscience laden with grievous sins, perhaps many sins, after Baptism ? Then, indeed, the thought of the presence of God's SPIRIT must be precious in your heart, for it tells you of your only hope,—but that, please God, a sure and certain hope,—namely, that HE, unseen within you, has still the power and will to enable you to repent : and if you truly repent, HE is faithful and just to forgive you, for His dear SON's sake.

God keep 'us ever one, by His HOLY SPIRIT in our hearts ; and dispose us to be contented where we fall short, and humble with what HE gives us !

SERMON CLXXIX.

FESTIVAL JOY.

FOR TUESDAY IN WHITSUN-WEEK.

ECCLESIASTES ix. 7, 8.

“Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works: let thy garments be always white, and let thy head lack no ointment.”

THIS is one of those passages, so remarkable in the writings of Solomon, in which the words of sinful men in the world are taken up by the HOLY GHOST, to be applied in a Christian sense. As they stand in Ecclesiastes, it seems very plain that they are intended to represent the sayings and thoughts of sensual, careless people, indulging themselves in their profane ways, their utter neglect of God and goodness, with the notion that this world is all. As if they should say, “When people are dead there is an end of them: therefore all we have to do is to enjoy ourselves as much as possible; to eat our bread with joy, and drink our wine with a merry heart; to wear always festival garments, and anoint ourselves with the oil of gladness, while God still ‘accepteth our works,’ that is, while it is yet well with us, and we are capable of finding delight in life, according to the order of God’s Providence.” It is much the same as the unbeliever’s saying, in St. Paul, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.”

But see the ever-watchful goodness and mercy of God. The words which the dissolute, wild-hearted sinner uses to encourage himself in his evil inconsiderate ways, HE teaches us to take up,

and use them in a very different sense; to express the inward joy and comfort which God's people may find in obeying Him. As thus: suppose a person giving himself up, with his whole heart, to the service and obedience of God; suppose him really withdrawing himself from the sins which had most easily beset him; suppose him making some great sacrifice, parting with what he held very dear, or submitting to pain or grief for CHRIST's sake: then the Holy and merciful COMFORTER seems to say to him in the words of the text, "Go thy way now, thank God, and take courage; the blessing of God is now restored to thee, and will be upon all thou hast, and upon thine ordinary employments and refreshments: now thou mayest eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works." For, "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do," if we "do all to the glory of God," we shall do it with His blessing and approbation: it will be so much more of happiness, joy, and thanksgiving to us.

Thus we may understand the words to teach the same lesson as the Apostle, when he says, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice." They are God's gracious word of permission to those who fear Him, encouraging them to enjoy, with innocence, moderation, and thankfulness, the daily comforts and reliefs, with which HE so plentifully supplies them, even in this imperfect world. They bring the same assurance from God as St. Paul gives to Timothy: "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving."

Let us only think for one moment, what a heavenly light it would throw over our ordinary works and refreshments, if, being always careful to set about them with a good conscience, we could seriously bring it home to ourselves, that they are so many tokens of heavenly and eternal love; so many reasonable grounds of hope, that God really accepteth our works.

But there is yet a higher, a Christian sense of these words, a sense in which they were taken of old by the holy Fathers of the Christian Church. The bread and wine, the white garments, the ointment for the head, are, according to this interpretation, figures and types of our Christian privileges, the blessings and favours of the kingdom of Heaven. It is, then, as if the Holy Word had said to us, being, as we are, Christian men, Members

of the mystical Body of our LORD and SAVIOUR, "Now you have been brought into the communion of Saints; now God has set His seal upon you; now," to speak the Apostle's words, "you are washed, sanctified, justified, in the name of the LORD JESUS, and by the Spirit of our God. Go your way, then; use your privileges with all reverence, joy, and fear. Draw near as often as you can, to the holy feast of that Bread and Wine, which, to those who take it with penitent and obedient hearts, is the very Body and Blood of our SAVIOUR CHRIST. Awful as such an invitation is, you may yet draw near with holy cheerfulness, having God's seal and mark upon your forehead, and the earnest of His Spirit in your hearts."

And it would seem that if Christians were at all such as they ought to be, the words might be well and profitably understood with a particular reference to this sacred season of Whitsuntide.

For at this time, as you know, the blessed COMFORTER came down, to set up the kingdom of CHRIST on earth; to dwell in men's hearts so as to unite them to CHRIST; by which union alone they can be partakers of the great things which the Gospel promises. This time then is the last of the holy seasons; it represents to us the full completion of God's unspeakable plan for the salvation of the world.

Supposing, then, any humble, faithful Christian to have rightly kept the former holy seasons: to have "worshipped and served CHRIST, for His conception, in faith; for His birth, in humility; for His sufferings, in patience and irreconcilable hatred of sin; for His death, by dying daily to sin; for His resurrection, by rising again more and more unto righteousness; for His ascension, by a heavenly mind:" may we not, without presumption, imagine him to hear the voice of his approving conscience, the certain yet silent whispers of the Holy Comforter in his heart, "Go thy way now, receive the fulness of the blessing of these sacred days, which thou hast so dutifully tried to observe. Let the light and warmth of Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide spread itself in a measure over the rest of thy year. Whatsoever God putteth in thine hand to do, in the way of holy devotion and true Church communion, do it with all thy might, in the humble hope that God now accepteth thy works."

Such is the kind of comfort, which the Sacred Scriptures encou-

rage us, as Christians, to take to ourselves, at every new return of these great days, bringing home to us things which are the very foundation of our hope. It is a comfort which would be to us far more perfect than it is, and far plainer to be understood, if we were less unworthy of our privileges; if we had not too generally fallen from the righteousness of JESUS CHRIST, given to us at our baptism. But even as it is, the words have a sound most comfortable to penitents, as well as to those who, by God's help, have kept themselves from wilful, deadly sin. They sound like words of absolution: "Go thy way, return again to that holy Table, from which thy transgressions had for a time separated thee: eat thy Bread, and drink thy Wine with a courageous and hopeful heart: for now there is hope that God accepteth thy works; that He hears thee, since thou hast left off inclining unto wickedness with thine heart. Thy case indeed is alarming, from the continual danger of a relapse; and thy loss at best is great, penitency instead of innocence being thy portion; yet go on steadily and cheerfully."

Thus, whether to souls that have as yet preserved the purity of their baptismal robe, or to humble penitent souls, desirous of recovering it, there are in Holy Scripture, if we had ears to hear them, most condescending invitations as well as warnings. CHRIST, in His Sacraments, is held out to them as their only but sufficient hope.

Observe, however, the words which follow, which to the hearing of a thoughtful Christian convey a very serious admonition, telling us on what these unspeakable privileges depend, so far as our own conduct is concerned: "Let thy garments be always white, and let thine head lack no ointment." This also would be felt by the Christians of ancient times, as particularly suitable to the holy season of Whitsuntide. For that, as you know, was one of the solemn times of baptizing, and the new baptized were always clothed in white, as a token of the "fine linen, pure and white, the righteousness of Saints," and of JESUS CHRIST; the wedding garment, which God had just put on them by making them Members of His SON. To say, therefore, to Christians at Whitsuntide, "Let thy garments be always white," was the same as saying, "Take care that at no time you stain or sully the bright and clear robe of your SAVIOUR's righteousness, which has just been thrown

over you : according to the Apostle's saying, 'As many as have been baptized into CHRIST have put on CHRIST.' As much as possible keep it clear from all spot of wilful sin ; and if you have unhappily fallen, give yourself no rest, until by your true and deep repentance, all your life long, you have put the matter entirely in your SAVIOUR'S hand, to wash out even that wilful stain, if so it please HIM, by his most precious blood."

Again, says the wise man, "Let thine head lack no ointment : " and this again is an allusion which would come with a particular meaning in early times to the new-baptized Christians, and those who had been present at their baptism. For both in that Sacrament, and in Confirmation, which comes next after it, they used in those days to anoint with holy oil. And oil is in Scripture the constant token of the gifts and graces of the HOLY SPIRIT. Therefore, to say, "Let thy head lack no ointment," would mean, "Take care that thou stir up, cherish, and improve the unspeakable Gift of which thou art now made partaker. Use diligently all the means of grace which CHRIST has provided for thee in His Kingdom, whereof thou art now come to be an inheritor."

Think not, that because we have received so great a blessing freely and fully, without any merit, without any exertion of our own, therefore we have but to go on quietly, taking no particular pains, and all will come right at last. Nay, the very greatness of the blessing is a call upon us to labour night and day, that we lose not, after all, the fruit of such exceeding mercy. It provokes the envy and spite of the Evil One, to take all the advantage he can of us : let it, therefore, encourage us to be more and more devout and watchful. What a shame for us to be negligent in prayer, who know that we have CHRIST'S SPIRIT abiding in us, to help our infirmities, and pray for us and with us ! What sin, what danger, what ruin, for us to be violently carried away with any worldly thing whatever, who know that "greater is HE that is in us than he that is in the world!"

If we earnestly endeavour, and pray in CHRIST'S name, to have such thoughts as these, when we are reminded of our baptismal privileges, we may hope that the care of the Church in appointing these holy seasons will not be thrown away upon us : we may hope next year to accompany her in her mysterious round of holy feasts and fasts, from Advent to Trinity Sunday, with more

dutiful and prepared hearts than we have done this year. But let us, above all things, beware of growing faint and cold, and treating these sacred things as matters of course. Let us remember that "we have opened our mouth unto the Lord," and we must not, we dare not, "go back:" but we shall undoubtedly go back, if we are not always labouring to go forward.

SERMON CLXXX.

APOSTOLIC GENEROSITY IN ENCOURAGING GOODNESS.

FOR THE FEAST OF ST. BARNABAS.

ACTS xi. 22, 23.

“ They sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch : who, when he came, and had seen the grace of GOD, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the LORD.”

THE character in which St. Barnabas is here presented to us, is that of a person greatly rejoicing in other men's goodness. He was glad when he saw the grace of GOD in his brethren. Of his doing so, there are several other instances ; indeed, almost the whole of his conduct towards St. Paul is full, from the beginning, of such generous and affectionate joy.

He, you may observe, was the first person at Jerusalem, who was able to convince himself of St. Paul's being truly converted. When that great Apostle came to Jerusalem, where he was known before only as a persecutor of the Name of CHRIST, “ he assayed to join himself to the Disciples, but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a Disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the Apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the LORD in the way.”

Almost ever afterwards, he continued the affectionate companion and friend of St. Paul. Presently after the visit to Antioch, in the text, we find him departing to Tarsus to seek Saul, and when he had found him, bringing him to Antioch. No doubt he was well aware that St. Paul was, humanly speaking, a much

greater and more noticeable person than himself; that by seeking him, and bringing him forward, he was as it were throwing himself into the back-ground: according to what is said afterwards, that wherever they went, Paul was "the chief speaker." But this made no difference to his affection for St. Paul, or his wish to have him with him. He rejoiced to see the grace of God, even when its light shone so brightly in others, as quite to eclipse and drown his own light.

All this is the more to be observed, because this feeling in the Apostle of Consolation is especially attributed by the Holy Scripture to the sanctifying SPIRIT of God. "He was glad when he saw the grace of God, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the LORD: FOR he was a good man, and full of the HOLY GHOST and of Faith." So that the charity which envieth not the spiritual attainments of others, is an especial token "of the HOLY GHOST and of Faith."

And it is worth observing, that by God's providence, and the Church's order, this festival of St. Barnabas, in every year, comes actually first of the Saints' days after Whit-Sunday, or however nearest to that blessed day. As though this charitable, unenvious mind, of which St. Barnabas was a pattern, were a grace which the HOLY COMFORTER especially delighted to honour, and by which he would have those especially try themselves, who wish to know if they are themselves walking by the SPIRIT, and not deceiving their own hearts.

But concerning this disposition to rejoice in other men's goodness, it is much easier to see how amiable it looks in others, than to practise it one's self in good earnest. Do not men envy others, not merely for their outward advantages, but for their goodness itself: especially for those parts of goodness which they themselves have not the heart to imitate? It is an ancient story, told of a virtuous heathen, that when a loud outcry was once raised against him, and he was to be banished from his country, a person of whom he asked a reason why he gave his vote against him, replied, "I have no objection to you, but I am quite tired of hearing every one call you the Just." Something of the kind, I fear, takes place not seldom, even within the very kingdom of Charity, the Church of our LORD and of His SPIRIT. Men wilfully imperfect themselves, are disquieted and grieved at having the good-

ness of others brought continually before their eyes. It is a silent standing reproach to them.

For example, those who are determined wantonly to neglect the holy duty of mortifying the flesh, cannot bear to see others strict; they are always inclined to seduce them from their rules of self-denial, or otherwise to interrupt them; and if they cannot do so, they generally get out of their sight. Persons of a sour and morose temper are apt to be very greatly provoked by the good humour and sweetness of those of a better mind. The careless about truth, the detracting and slanderous tongue, is not seldom the more restless, for observing that the hearer is scrupulous, and afraid to join in any such conversation; he wants his neighbour, if not to partake of his sin, at least not to keep at such a *very* great distance from the same. And so throughout life, there is a disposition in the unrenewed heart, to grudge all those graces which go too far beyond itself; a disposition the very opposite to that, which the HOLY GHOST wrought in St. Barnabas by faith. He rejoiced, but these are sorry, on beholding the grace of God.

It certainly must require no small faith to believe, that it is better on the whole for others to do the good which you desire, than for it to be done by yourself. St. Barnabas must have his heart steadily fixed on the unseen rewards prepared on high, to make him acquiesce thus joyfully in his companion, St. Paul, receiving so much more of the encouragement provided for apostolical men in this life. Such a mind could hardly be, without deep devotion and forgetfulness of self: such as one may see in St. John Baptist, in his way of speaking of our Blessed Lord, concerning whom it was a matter of joy to him, to say and think, "He must increase, but I must decrease:" such, again, as in the Old Testament, we read of in the beautiful history of Jonathan, and the way in which he so gladly yielded the first place in every thing to David. Such self-denial, when regularly kept up, and not only indulged now and then, out of laziness or partial affection, is one of the clearest tokens that God's HOLY SPIRIT is with men, preparing them for eternal glory.

And it is seen in nothing so much, as in making persons continually watchful, to cherish and confirm one another in every good purpose of heart; in which respect the Spirit of the Gospel is most di-

rectly opposed to the evil and selfish spirit of this age. For I know not how it is, but people, under pretence of liberty of one sort or another, are come to be, very generally, quite indifferent about the grace and salvation of others. They say, "it is a matter between God and each man's conscience; it is no concern of theirs, they cannot be accountable for other men." But surely words like these, especially when uttered in scornful tones, are too like the cruel and profane talk of the first murderer, Cain; who, when God enquired of him concerning his brother Abel, rudely answered, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Surely the hard, indifferent way in which too many of us treat the thought of our neighbour's condition towards God, is sadly like Cain's way: sadly like the temper which led to a brother's murder.

The Christian, Catholic, renewed heart is altogether different from this; it is not at all satisfied, as men of the world are, with persons going on decently and quietly; it wants them to be inwardly sound and pure; first of all to have a good "purpose of heart," and then to persevere in that purpose, "cleaving" to our LORD and SAVIOUR continually. That anxiety about your neighbour's soul, which Christian love causes you to feel, will be a continual, a watchful, a self-denying, but, for the most part, a *silent* principle. It will show itself in deeds rather than in words, in timely prevention of mischief, rather than in late and loud remonstrance. It will not be very sanguine, nor reckon too much on any good which appears to be done, knowing that we are all by nature unstable as water. Nor yet will it be too soon disheartened or disconcerted, knowing that there is hope even of the worst, and that constant efforts and prayers, with the Church of God to your aid, will, by the aid of His good SPIRIT, prevail against every thing but hardened obstinacy.

Above all, this care of other's good purposes, to be at all like that of St. Barnabas, must be accompanied with scrupulously good example; even as it is here said of this holy Apostle, very emphatically, that "he was a good man."

And it will ever keep in view the growth of the Church and kingdom of JESUS CHRIST, as being the one thing for which it works; and our LORD and SAVIOUR HIMSELF, as being the one Master whom it serves. It works not for a sect or party, but for the holy Apostolical Church herself: as St. Barnabas, not re-

garding his own or any other Apostle's name, laboured only to have "much people added unto the LORD."

Consequently, such a labourer will never be ashamed to seek out help, when he finds the work getting beyond him, or knows that another will do it better: so St. Barnabas, as was before observed, "departed to Tarsus to seek Saul," and brought him to Antioch; and thus doing, he was instrumental in providing all the Churches of the Gentiles with the chiefest of all their teachers.

All this refers, of course, more immediately to the office and calling of Pastors in the Church of CHRIST. But every one of us has a part in it, in such measure as we are at any time witnesses of each other's good resolutions, and have the power, by God's good Providence, of doing any thing towards confirming our brethren. For example, as often as we offer ourselves to God in the Holy Sacrament of the LORD's Supper, so often we see the grace of God, bringing many persons, as we trust, with holy purposes, to draw near their LORD and SAVIOUR, in the way HE HIMSELF ordained. It becomes us surely not only to be glad, but to watch and pray afterwards one for another; and if need and occasion be, to "exhort one another," that "with purpose of heart" all may "cleave to the LORD" JESUS; all may keep their holy vows, then and there renewed to HIM and to His Church. The Holy Communion received together, is a very special bond between Christians, making it their duty to pray each for his brother, and the duty of those, who are any how in authority, to "reprove, rebuke, exhort" without fear: those, I say, who are in authority; for otherwise the office of censurer and reprover is too grave, for any person to presume to take it lightly on himself.

Finally, the good advice of St. Barnabas, here given to the people of Antioch, may well serve as a kind of watchword for all Christians of every station, in times when the Faith and the Church are being violently assailed by their enemies. Then is the time to practise a holy obstinacy; not to mind if you be not able to give reasons, and talk knowingly about things, but "with purpose of heart to cleave to the LORD;" that is, to abide by what the Church has taught you, let people say what they will.

This will be called bigotry and stubbornness : and they who are wise in their own conceit will insist on your giving *a reason* for every thing. Well, then, let your reason be given, not in words, but in a holy life. Humbly and meekly, but with all Christian boldness, let us strive to *obey* the Bible, the Church, and the Prayer-Book ; and so to put the enemies of truth to shame ; and, by the whole course of our lives, to exhort those who are partakers with us of the Gospel, that “ with purpose of heart they cleave unto the LORD ” for ever.

S E R M O N C L X X X I .

SELF-DENYING LOYALTY TO CHRIST.

FOR ST. JOHN BAPTIST'S DAY.

ST. JOHN iii. 30.

“ HE must increase, but I must decrease.”

No doubt, St. John the Baptist is in a particular sense an example for the Clergy, more than for other Christians. As he was sent to prepare the way for our LORD's first coming, so they are sent to prepare the way for His second. They, as he, are to go before CHRIST, in the spirit and power of Elias, to make ready a people prepared for HIM.

Many parts, therefore, of his character and conduct, are a direct pattern for those only, who were sent as he was; they do not so immediately concern others, who have no such trust.

As, for example, his “ boldly rebuking vice,” which is mentioned in the Collect for the day as one remarkable part of his character, and which he practised both towards the Scribes and Pharisees, when he called them a generation of vipers; and in warning Herod of the consequences, if he took his brother's wife to be his own. In this St. John was a pattern, first and chiefly, for the Ministers of CHRIST: for it is they who have a direct commission from HIM to call people to account for their sins, and to judge them, for a while, in His stead. But he is also a pattern for all who are in any way trusted with the government of others, as kings, masters, elders, friends who can advise. Those whose station calls on them to do good by reproof, must try to do it

as St. John did, faithfully, discreetly, and boldly : still, as I said, it is the calling of CHRIST's Ministers especially. And the same may be said of all other parts of the Baptist's example. He set a copy in the first place for Priests. But in that sense in which all Christians are Priests, appointed to offer up themselves, their souls and bodies, for a living sacrifice to GOD ALMIGHTY, and to prepare, each in his station, the way of CHRIST : in that sense the Baptist's example was meant for all, and ought to be followed by all. Observe how he in his calling made ready His SAVIOUR's way, and let us in our several callings endeavour to make ready our Judge's way.

And above all, let us try to enter into the spirit of that deep and affectionate loyalty, if I may call it so, to our LORD, which is every where to be seen in the holy Baptist's character. I mean his not thinking of himself, but of his MASTER ; giving up every thing to His glory ; rejoicing, as he went on, to find that JESUS CHRIST every day was showing HIMSELF more and more glorious above him, and throwing him quite, as people say, into the shade. This is the feeling which St. John expresses in the text, on complaint having been made to him by some of his own disciples, " Rabbi, HE that was with thee beyond Jordan, to Whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come unto HIM." They said it in the way of complaint, thinking it hard that their master should be surpassed, and thought less of, in consequence of the rising of this new Prophet, of Whom as yet they knew hardly any thing. Upon this, CHRIST's faithful servant and forerunner took occasion to utter, in express words, that which in reality all his ministry had been bearing witness of, that he had no power, no glory, no holiness of his own ; he was but a servant, ministering, for a time, to One Who was unspeakably, immeasurably greater than himself. " A man," a mere man such as I am, he tells them, " can receive nothing, except it be given him from above." I am such an one, and I must not go beyond my commission. " Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said I am not the CHRIST, but am sent before HIM." He takes up his disciples' word which they had just used, saying, " HE to Whom thou barest witness." And he says, " If I bare witness to HIM then, do not expect me to contradict that witness now. On the contrary, I tell you, that in the great work of God, which is

about to begin, the setting up of the kingdom of Heaven, there is the same kind of difference between HIM and me, as in a marriage between the bridegroom and the bridegroom's friend: "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy, therefore, is fulfilled." "Every day," St. John seems to tell them, "I have more and more of the same kind of satisfaction, which a true disinterested friend of any man has in his friend's happy marriage. Every day I rejoice more and more in feeling that I am nothing, and that HE is all; that HE must increase, but I must decrease."

This is what I mean by St. John's *loyal* feeling; His deep and constant devotion of himself to our LORD; the deeper and more constant, as he had, in the eye of the world and the flesh, to lose something by our LORD's being honoured. His "burning and shining light" was to be, in comparison, put out and to disappear, like a star, or rather like a lamp, when the sun arises. And he is glad and thankful to have it so: like Jonathan, who truly rejoiced in seeing David by degrees mounting up to the kingdom, which, according to earthly ways of thinking, Jonathan might have looked for himself.

This loyal and self-devoted feeling, St. John here expresses in words; but his whole life and conduct before had expressed it, to a considerate mind, quite as clearly. Even before His birth, it was provided that he should give signification of such a devout mind. When Elizabeth, being with child of him, was visited by the Blessed Virgin, just after the Conception of our LORD, this great miracle happened; that "as soon as the voice of Mary's salutation sounded in Elizabeth's ears, the babe leaped in her womb for joy." This token he gave of the HOLY GHOST, with which he was filled, even from his mother's womb, that even then, before his birth, he did homage, and showed forth devotion to our SAVIOUR. It was a type and ensample of what he should be, what all faithful Christians should be, as long as they live in the world: they should sacrifice and devote themselves entirely to the glory and honour of HIM who came to die for them.

Accordingly, when St. John's time came to preach and to baptize, all his doctrine ran upon this; that neither his preaching nor his baptism was any thing at all in itself, but only to prepare

the way for the perfect Gospel, the Spiritual Baptism, which JESUS CHRIST should set up afterwards. "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand:" it is not come, it is only near. "I am not the CHRIST, but am sent before HIM." "I baptize you with water, but HE shall baptize you with the HOLY GHOST." HE is "mightier than I." "His shoes' latchet I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose." "HE shall baptize you with the HOLY GHOST and with fire."

It may seem again suitable to this dutiful temper of mind, that St. John, when the people asked him what they should do, referred them always to the plainest and simplest duties, the very thing, as it were, which came next in each man's way; saying to the common sort, "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." Again, to the publicans, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you;" and to the soldiers, "Do violence to no man." In every instance, the advice which he gives was as plain and simple as could be, not at all leading them to think of him, nor of any particular wisdom or goodness that was in him, but only to glorify God in their stations by sincere obedience.

So again, the Baptist never shrank from showing people the severe side of the truth. "The wrath to come," "the unquenchable fire," "the axe laid to the root of the trees:"—these are the things of which he continually kept putting people in mind: but these are not the subjects on which he would have delighted to dwell, had he desired to please and attract his hearers, or to obtain personal influence and authority with them.

But in this respect, as in all others, the Forerunner of CHRIST was like His Apostles after HIM: he preached not himself, but CHRIST JESUS the LORD.

One who was so minded would of course be greatly astonished, not to say shocked, at our LORD's coming to be baptized of him; and we know how St. John shrank from it. "I have need to be baptized of THEE, and comest THOU to me?" It would seem to him quite a turning of things upside down: knowing, as he had done from the beginning, that CHRIST was to increase, and he to decrease. He might not indeed yet positively know, that this was the SON of GOD; yet he might know enough to make him, in some measure, doubt and muse, Who and how great HE might

prove. And this being so, he could not endure the thought of putting himself at all before HIM.

Then, after our LORD had been baptized, and the holy Baptist knew for certain, that "this is HE which baptizeth with the HOLY GHOST," see how he rejoiced on every occasion to make HIM known, to spread His glory, to cause all men, and especially his own disciples, to come near and believe in CHRIST. Another person, though he might for duty's sake send men away from himself to our LORD, might yet perhaps feel more or less troubled at doing so; it might be an act of self-denial to him; but St. John's behaviour every where shows that it was the very joy of his heart to do so, the very purpose for which he lived, the object which he had always in view. Therefore he loses no time, but the very next day he makes haste to show our LORD to his disciples, with that mysterious saying, "Behold the LAMB of GOD:" words which, to the world's end, will bring with them the remembrance of this great Saint to all well-instructed Christians, and will encourage them, forgetting their own ease and glory, to press on, and do their very best by example first, and then in other ways, to honour CHRIST crucified, and make HIM better known to their brethren.

Finally, in the last of his trials, his imprisonment through the malice of Herodias, we find him still of the same mind, still careful to turn all, as well as he could, to the preparing of CHRIST's way; still anxious to put himself down, and to exalt his MASTER and SAVIOUR. For this purpose, having "heard in the prison the works of CHRIST, he sent two of his disciples" with the question, "Art Thou HE that should come, or look we for another?" He could not be ignorant Who JESUS was, after what he had seen at His Baptism: but no doubt his intention was, to show his disciples the truth concerning HIM. Thus he died, as he had lived, pointing out JESUS to men.

Now there is one point in particular which we may well learn this day, from considering St. John Baptist's character; namely, that in such measure as we are duly preparing to meet CHRIST, when HE comes to be our Judge, in the same measure we shall be still practising to humble ourselves more and more;—to think less of what we do or have done, and more of HIM and His great unspeakable mercies. We shall no longer anxiously and grudgingly

count the moments, the minutes, the hours, which we spend on serving CHRIST in His Church, but every little time we can win for that holy employment, away from the world, we shall reckon it clear gain. The more we can give, the more yet shall we contrive to spare: every step in any kind of Holiness will be to us like a step upwards in a high mountain, revealing to our sight fresh blessings and fresh duties, beyond what we had ever dreamed of, until the last and most blessed step of all shall land us in the Paradise of GOD; there, with the blessed Baptist, and all the Saints, to await the full revelation of that kingdom, for which, by GOD's help, we shall have truly tried to prepare ourselves.

S E R M O N CLXXXII.

CHARITY QUICKENED BY REPENTANCE.

FOR ST. PETER'S DAY.

ST. LUKE xxii. 32.

“ I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not : and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

ALL readers of the holy Gospel must have observed CHRIST's very particular concern for St. Peter. He was manifestly favoured, in some sense, more than the rest of the Twelve. St. John, indeed, is called the Disciple whom JESUS loved, and he was admitted to lie in His breast at supper. But St. Peter is always mentioned as first in dignity over the glorious company of Apostles. In our LORD's lifetime he is always named first, both of the whole Twelve, and of the Three who were chosen to be with HIM on special occasions ; and he is several times put forward to speak for the rest, in a manner which shows that they all in some way looked up to him. Likewise, after our LORD's death, whenever the Apostles were met together, except it were on that one occasion at Jerusalem, when St. James presided as Bishop of the place, the first room was given to St. Peter. It seems his place to stand up and propose matters for the rest to consider ; or again, to speak in the name of the rest when any thing was to be said for them all to the Jews, to their rulers, or to particular persons ; for instance, to Ananias and Sapphira.

But there are two occasions before our LORD's death, on which HE seems more particularly to have shown His great love for this favoured Apostle, and to speak of him in a way which would

cause all who desire to enter into the mind of CHRIST, to think very much of St. Peter. One was, when upon St. Peter's solemnly owning HIM SON of GOD, He said to him, "Thou art a Rock, and on this Rock," that is, "on thee, joined to ME by this faith, I will build MY Church: and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." This seems to show, that on St. Peter, as first of the Apostles and Prophets of the New Testament, a great deal would depend; the Church was in some way to be builded upon him: and it seems also to show, that the Evil One might be expected to make some great effort to overturn St. Peter, and shake his faith: against which fearful time our LORD gives the most comfortable assurance, that the gates of Hell can never, in the end, prevail against His Church. Let Peter, and with him the body of Bishops and Pastors, of whom he is in some sense chief,—let them continue, as they will continue, in the true faith of CHRIST the SON of GOD, and the powers of darkness shall never get the better of the kingdom of Heaven. It may, in some respects, degenerate and decay: but it will not be overthrown, for it is founded upon a rock.

The other time, when our LORD's care and love of St. Peter was especially shown before His death, was on the very night of His Agony: when, as HE HIMSELF told his Apostles, "Satan desired to have them, that he might sift them as wheat." The Evil One knew how much depended on the Apostles, and on St. Peter in particular; he knew it by the remarkable promise which we have just been considering: and therefore, as in the case of Job, so also in their case, he sought to have power given him against them for a time, to see if he could by any means make them fall away from CHRIST. This is what our LORD calls "sifting them as wheat,"—trying them, if he could by any means find out which of them were good corn and which were chaff. This, Satan was about to do by the afflictions which came upon our LORD, and HE, knowing their weakness, prepares them for it. HE prepares St. Peter in particular, by telling him that HE had prayed for him in particular. What could be a greater token of the merciful love and care of our heavenly Advocate, than such an earnest and special intercession? One reason of it might be, the high place among His Apostles which HE intended St. Peter should hold: another, His knowing that the great Apostle's zeal

and affection would before long lead him into danger beyond the others. Our LORD foresaw, that when they all forsook HIM and fled, St. Peter, with St. John, would speedily turn back, and follow HIM into the High Priest's palace, which would put him into great danger: as we know it did, for he denied three times that he had any thing to do with our LORD. CHRIST therefore, in His great mercy, prayed beforehand for St. Peter, that whatever words of unbelief he might utter in the hurry of that night's alarm, yet his faith might not fail: and we know it did not fail: for the moment our SAVIOUR turned and looked upon him, he repented from the bottom of his heart, and went out, and wept bitterly. And CHRIST, soon after His Resurrection, in token of His entire forgiveness, promised him the honour of suffering for His sake, and committed to him three times over and over the especial care of the lambs and sheep of His flock.

And as the very thing which led him into temptation was his too daring, but earnest and loyal affection for our LORD, so, after he had recovered, he made good those other words of his Master: "when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." His thankfulness for his own narrow escape was to be shown by his charitable care to strengthen in every way the hands of his fellow disciples, and make them hold fast by the Rock on which he himself leaned. Thus, in the Acts of the Apostles, he strengthens them; first, by proposing to elect another in Judas's place; next, by declaring to the whole multitude the meaning of the descent of the HOLY GHOST, and the Resurrection of JESUS CHRIST: whereby he laid the foundation of the Church, which thenceforth began to be built up upon him and the other Apostles. Then he strengthened all their hands by the great miracles which God gave him power to do; healing the lame man at the gate of the temple, and striking down Ananias and Sapphira with a word; nay, and even by his very shadow (for so we are given to understand) healing the sick as he passed by. Afterwards he goes down to Samaria, on purpose to confirm or strengthen the new-baptized there: which is the first mention of Confirmation in the history of the Church. And then what strength and courage did our SAVIOUR add to the whole Church by St. Peter, in that HE called him by an holy Angel to be first to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, and to baptize Cornelius and his household: as also

afterwards, by delivering him from prison, again through the ministry of an angel; and by that witness which he bore at Jerusalem, when the Apostles and Elders were assembled in council, against the first corrupters of the Church!

Thus, wherever we find St. Peter mentioned in the Acts, he is employed in "strengthening the brethren;" and when we read his two epistles, we find them remarkably answering the same description. The very word, "confirm," or "strengthen," appears to have dwelt upon his mind, from his manner of using it more than once. The whole, indeed, of his first epistle is taken up with strengthening his brethren against persecution; and of the second, against false and corrupt doctrine. And so he went on to the end. He who was of himself as a reed shaken with the wind, by his union with JESUS CHRIST, and the commission he received from HIM, came to be an unshaken rock, on which the unstable but well-meaning might lay hold, and find great support in time of need.

Thus was St. Peter the chosen type and sample of the aid, which CHRIST has provided for us all, by ordaining regularly Bishops and Pastors in His Church. They are His special provision for strengthening the brethren; and if, in spite of this gracious care of His, the brethren still continue weak and unstable, whose fault can it be, but either the Pastors' own, for being in some way unfaithful to their trust, or else the people's, for refusing obediently to hear and follow them?

Considering more particularly the words of the text, they seem to caution us especially against a certain way of thinking, which goes as far, perhaps, as any other, in making void CHRIST's good purpose in the ordinance of the Christian Ministry, discouraging very sadly both Pastors and people. The feeling I mean is, that when God's Ministers are known to have done amiss, or to be chargeable with some particular imperfection in their office, presently the devil is at hand to suggest that it is vain, perhaps presumptuous, for such as they to labour in so holy a calling. When this thought arises in a Pastor's own heart, it makes him idle, and listless in his duty; when in the heart of any of his flock, it no less certainly makes them disrespectful and undutiful. The right way, of course, is to encourage it, so far as it makes us humble, but to overcome it, when it would check us in our plain

duty. For instance, if any of our former sins, of which we have truly repented, comes strongly before our conscience, we ought not to let it hinder us from setting about any good duty, but it should be brought before GOD, in prayer that HE would make us very humble, circumspect, and serious in our way of performing that duty.

And as to the people,—the infirmity of their Pastors, or of any others in authority over them, should cause them not to despise, but to pray for them.

In both cases, the example of St. Peter, if we would recollect it, might do much good. See what our LORD says to him ; “Thou art on the point of a sad fall ; but when thou hast been raised up again, strengthen thy brethren.” St. Peter, then, if after his repentance he had drawn back from holy offices under the notion of being unworthy, would not have done according to CHRIST’s will : and if the people had rejected or scorned him for the same cause, they would have been resisting CHRIST’s ordinance. He was neither to be slothful, and omit warning others, because the remembrance of his own three denials of CHRIST hung heavy at his heart ; nor were they to taunt him with it, or say, This man preaches faith, yet he denied his Master in danger.

We see at once how utterly unsuitable and wrong such feelings as these would have been in St. Peter’s case. Let us depend on it, the like feelings cannot be very right,—cannot well please CHRIST,—in the case of any other Bishop or Pastor, and the people committed to his charge. It never can be right, either in Pastors or in any other Christians, to become negligent of their duty in time to come, because they are uneasy at the thought of wrong conduct in times past. Rather let us say to ourselves, “If so great exertion was necessary for a holy man like St. Peter, after he had been betrayed into one sin, of which, however, he bitterly and for ever repented, at the first call from his Master ; how anxious, how unwearied, how self-denying, ought we to be, who have sinned, perhaps repeatedly and wilfully, after grace so much greater than St. Peter’s, inasmuch as he was not yet in the kingdom of Heaven, as we have been ever since our baptism ! And we most likely needed to be called many and many times before we would repent ; whereas the holy St. Peter, at one look

from his Master, remembered himself, and returned to his better mind !

“ At least let us be diligent in our repentance, now that we have in some sort repented : let us be as active in good works as ever we have been in sins : that we may not forfeit His grace and mercy, Who only can make atonement for us : and that we may show ourselves truly thankful to HIM for so great goodness, in that HE not only redeemed us at first, but also still allows us a chance of recovery, after our doing so much to cast away His bounty from us.”

And among other fruits of repentance, it becomes us to be very earnest, as St. Peter was, in warning and guarding our brethren, as God gives us opportunity, against the special sin, be it what it may, to which we have been unhappily too much inclined ourselves. Only let us beware that this our care be truly charitable ; that we do not seek to be praised or approved, nor to make ourselves out, in any manner, worthy and good sort of men. Let us check our high thoughts, and the pleasure we are apt to find in being praised, with the recollection of those faults of our own, which we know, and God knows, but which we should least wish for man to know. Let that remembrance hang heavy on our hearts, and prevent us from ever again feeling gay and delighted when our brethren praise us : as it is said of St. Peter, that through all his after life, great and good and holy as he was, and mighty as were his works wrought in CHRIST's name for His Church, he never could hear the cock crow without weeping : that sound had more power to distress him, than the praise of all the Churches had to exalt him. Thus did he acknowledge his fault, and his sin was ever before him.

So whereinsoever any Christian has fallen, and has been by God's grace raised up, let him always bear in mind how near he has been to the worst of evils ; how he had brought himself into the most dangerous condition, from which nothing but the intercession of CHRIST could save him. Let him be ashamed that he did not repent sooner, and that when he did, it was in such poor and scanty measure. Let him assure himself that the evil one, from whose snares he has in part recovered, is watching him day and night, more eager, if possible, to overthrow him again, than he was to tempt him to his former sin.

We have all need of God's forgiveness: great, unspeakable need of it. Let us not forget that our chance of it depends, in great measure, on our doing our best for our brethren.

Remember the saying of an holy Apostle: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

S E R M O N CLXXXIII.

PROFIT AND HOME FORSAKEN FOR CHRIST.

FOR THE FEAST OF ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE.

ST. MATTHEW iv. 21, 22.

“ And HE called them : and they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.”

THE Collect for the day points out to us, as usual with our Church on Saints' days, a part of St. James's example for our particular imitation. We pray that as he left his father and all that he had, and without delay was obedient unto the calling of CHRIST, and followed HIM, so we, forsaking all worldly and carnal affections, may be evermore ready to follow His holy Commandments.

Thus our thoughts are carried back to the time when it seemed good to the SON of GOD, in His divine foresight, to call four fishermen from their work on the shore of the sea of Galilee to be His Apostles, and chief foundations of His Church. “ Follow ME,” HE said, first to St. Peter and St. Andrew, “ and I will make you fishers of men.” “ They drew their nets to land, forsook all, and followed HIM.” Presently after, going a little further, HE saw their partners also, “ James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets : and HE called them : and they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed HIM.”

Now, although both these pairs of holy brethren, St. Peter and St. Andrew first, and afterwards St. James and St. John, were

called by our SAVIOUR at one time, from one employment, and both alike followed HIM without delay, yet the history, when narrowly considered, seems to signify certain differences between those who were first and those who were afterwards called; between St. Peter's case and St. James's; differences which are not unimportant to be considered by us.

It would appear as if Zebedee and his sons were what the world calls "better off" than Simon and Andrew, the sons of Jonah. For of these latter, when our LORD finally summoned them, it is only said, that "when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed HIM:" but of James and John, that "they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and followed after JESUS."

They had then a father alive; and, as the history shows afterwards, a mother. For Salome, the mother of Zebedee's children, was one of those who waited on our LORD in Galilee. To her care the Blessed Virgin was intrusted by our LORD Himself, when HE said on the Cross to her son, "Behold thy mother." And on the morning of the Resurrection, she was one of the women who came early to the sepulchre with sweet spices, to do honour to our LORD's Body.

Both the father, then, and the mother of St. James were living at the time of our SAVIOUR's call to him: but we have no reason to think the same of St. Peter. We know that he had been married, and that his wife and her mother were perhaps living, but we have no mention of his parents in the New Testament: and it seems likely that they were both dead, before the time that he was summoned to leave his home.

Again, the mention of "the hired servants," would make it appear that Zebedee, St. James's father, was in a somewhat easier and more plentiful condition of life than St. Peter and St. Andrew were. And this agrees with what we read of St. John, James's brother, being known to the High-Priest, so that he ventured after JESUS into the palace of the High-Priest, when all the other disciples were afraid to follow HIM there.

St. James then, in common with his brother St. John, had this above many others to render his obedience to our LORD's call particularly acceptable; that he gave up the society of his parents to do so. He might have enjoyed, as other people of his rank did,

a comfortable home, and a respectable place in the world. But he left all this to follow ONE Who had not where to lay His head; Who was called a Samaritan, a deceiver, and said to have dealings with the devil.

And St. James did this at once. He did not stand waiting and considering, but courageously obeyed the first invitation, to join himself to our most Holy SAVIOUR. He and his younger brother, St. John, *immediately* “left the ship and their father, and followed after JESUS.”

St. James, then, may be regarded as affording an example and encouragement to those who follow CHRIST, in two sorts of trials more particularly: those which arise from a thriving condition in the world, and those which attend, sometimes, on a quiet and comfortable home. To obey our LORD’s call, he left “both the ship and his father:” both the business to which he had been brought up, and on which he might depend, if not for wealth, at least for a comfortable maintenance; and the consolation of being with his parents, and living peaceably at home with them.

And for this, his double self-denial, how greatly was he rewarded! Our LORD received him to be not only a disciple, but an Apostle; and not only an Apostle, but one out of three whom HE particularly favoured above the other Apostles, keeping them near HIM on the highest and holiest occasions, when the rest were bade remain at the threshold, so to speak, of His glories. St. Peter, St. James, and St. John were alone with HIM, when HE raised Jairus’s daughter, and restored her to her afflicted parents: alone with HIM in the holy Mount, when HE was transfigured, and had Moses and Elias talking with HIM: alone (except St. Andrew) with HIM, when he uttered those awful prophecies concerning the end of the world: alone with HIM, finally, when HE submitted Himself to His agony in the garden, and “His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, and there appeared unto HIM an Angel from Heaven strengthening HIM.” St. James, in each case, is the second named of the highly-favoured ones, whom HE chose among living men, to be His witnesses on these solemn occasions.

Again, St. James was the very first of the Apostolic College to follow his LORD in martyrdom. When “Herod stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the Church, he killed James the brother

of John with the sword." Up to that time, the number of the holy Twelve, restored in St. Matthias after Judas's sad fall, had continued complete: but now it seemed good to our SAVIOUR to grant to this faithful Apostle the crown of all His favours, the honour of dying for Him. And thus he tasted, according to his own prayer, of the cup which our LORD drank of, and was baptized with the baptism that HE had been baptized withal.

It might seem almost sinful presumption, for such as we are, to take to ourselves, as if intended for our pattern, the example of so great and holy a Saint, one brought so very near the Person of our Divine SAVIOUR Himself. But we know that it is not presumption, since even CHRIST's own example, and that of the Eternal Father, are set before us for our study and imitation. We are bid to do to one another as CHRIST did to His disciples; and to "be perfect as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect." Much less then must we shrink from contemplating the pattern of any Saint or Apostle, how holy and glorious soever, as one which we ought to copy; since we shall surely be judged by all such patterns, once made known to us by God's Providence, in His Holy Scriptures or His Church. They will be reckoned among the talents, which will burthen and sink us into earth at the last day, if we be found to have neglected the due improvement of them now.

Does any man ask how he can imitate St. James, he, a private Christian, not called to be an Apostle, not summoned by the providence of God to any one great sacrifice, which might gather as it were into one the self-denials of a whole life? Let such an one think this within himself, that there may be, there probably are, occasions in which his worldly business, whatever it be, is apt to interfere more or less with his duty to our SAVIOUR. The memory and fancy of his shop, his plough, his garden, or his loom, mingles unseasonably with his prayers and holy readings, and tries to hinder him from attending to our SAVIOUR's voice, inwardly whispering, "Follow ME." Well, on all such occasions, let us manfully put aside the intruding thought, saying as Felix did, but with a better meaning, "Go thy way now, and come again when I shall have a convenient season."

It may be, that by such constant and resolute attendance on his

prayers, determined neither to miss them, nor to go through them with his mind elsewhere, a Christian may seem as if he should be more or less a loser in this present world. So much the more let him keep to his purpose. It will indeed be a blessing, should God give him some little share of the reward of those who suffer in earnest, be it little or much, in His Name.

But let us suppose his trial of another kind. Suppose it comes, not from worldly gain, but from worldly peace and quiet, and home satisfactions. Doubtless a quiet and affectionate home is one of the greatest blessings that a man can imagine in this world; yet even this may sometimes prove a mischief. "A man's foes," as our LORD said, may sometimes "be of his own household." As our LORD's own Brethren came out to take hold on Him, and prevent His preaching, saying, "He is beside Himself:" so it is very easy to imagine how, in ten thousand ways, affectionate, but worldly-minded fathers, and brethren, and friends, and husbands, and wives, may check one another in their duties, especially in the self-denying parts of Christian holiness: how with the kindest feelings, they may be always striving to put us wrong. Their example too often speaks aloud, and says, "Surely you need practise no kind of severity or strictness." Their instructions not seldom take us the same way. They cannot bear to see people denying themselves, and make a point of interrupting them, by every kind of earnest remonstrance, and expression of feeling: much as St. Peter did, when he took and rebuked our SAVIOUR, saying, "Be it far from Thee, LORD; this shall not be unto Thee."

Certainly I should imagine, that from one friend or another, most of us must have met before now with objections to holy obedience, not altogether unlike this: which is as if it had pleased Zebedee, when he heard CHRIST call his sons, to argue against the call, and say, "He could not yet so well spare them: it was too much to ask of them quite entirely to give up their old employment: for a time, and in some measure, they might come, but he could not willingly permit them to give up all."

Now we see what St. James and St. John would have done, had their father Zebedee made objections like these, as so many people do now, to their children's wholly following CHRIST and His Church. With all dutiful respect to their father on earth,

they would still have given him to understand, that they looked to their Father in Heaven above all : and when HE called them, not even a father's wish could hinder them from saying, " Here am I." We read not that Zebedee made any opposition to his sons' joining CHRIST, but if he had, this we know must have been the tenor of their answer : according to their LORD's declaration afterwards, " If any man come after ME, and hate not his father and mother,"—if he be not prepared to give them up rather than CHRIST, and so to practise what the world will call, " hating them,"—" he cannot be MY Disciple." And in a like spirit, no doubt, should every Christian make answer, when tempted by parent or near friend, directly or indirectly, to break any of CHRIST's plain commandments, or to live in contempt of the holy ordinances of His Church.

Persons who, in sincerity and truth, make sacrifices of this kind,—who really prefer, not their own fancy, but CHRIST's will, even to family comfort,—may find great encouragement in the favour which our LORD showed to His Holy Apostle, St. James. Their prayers for light and strength, they have every reason to hope, will be bountifully answered ; CHRIST will make Himself peculiarly present to them, in all His works, both of mercy, of wonder, and of judgment : whether HE raise the dead, or show Himself in agony or in glory, or come to judge Jerusalem, those who have made great sacrifices for Him will be His favoured and honoured witnesses.

But let them beware of one thing, which also the after history of St. James points out, and that is, presuming on CHRIST's favour. Those too much beloved brethren, the sons of Thunder, rejoicing as they did in their special nearness to HIM, were anxious to have it continued for ever, and that in preference to all others. HE rebuked them so far, as that HE would not suffer them to dream of obtaining a high place by any partiality of His. The humblest person, HE said, would have it, whosoever that person might be : and HE turned their ambition, rather, to the thought of trials to be endured for His sake. " Ye shall drink indeed, of MY cup, and be baptized with MY Baptism : but to sit on MY right hand, and on MY left, is not MINE to give."

God give us grace, my Christian Brethren, to practise such a

mind as this : not to value ourselves on any little sacrifices, which HE in His mercy may give us an opportunity of making for HIM : but still to look forward to the unknown hour, when we shall have to drink of His cup, to die as HE hath died before us ! With that hour full on our mind, may we cheerfully pass by whatever stands in our way, and being called by CHRIST, give ourselves up *forthwith* to fulfil His holy commandments !

SERMON CLXXXIV.

ANGELS WAITING ON THE CHURCH.

FOR ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY.

ST. JOHN i. 51.

“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see Heaven open, and the angels of GOD ascending and descending upon the SON OF MAN.”

It does not seem certain, whether or no St. Bartholomew, whose memory we honour this day with thanksgiving to GOD, was or was not the same with Nathanael, that Israelite without guile, whom our LORD so graciously received on his first approach to HIM. Whether they were two persons or one, is a matter on which those who know most of Christian antiquity hardly seem to have made up their minds.

However, it is clear that the promise, addressed by our LORD to Nathanael, is well suited to our consideration on any Apostle's day, and especially when the Church, as to-day by her Epistle, calls our attention more particularly to the marvellous tokens of GOD's Presence, which St. Bartholomew, in common with the other Apostles, received. “ By their hands were many signs and wonders wrought among the people :—insomuch that they brought the sick into the streets, and laid them upon beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them ¹ :” GOD giving such grace to those His first chosen witnesses, as HE afterwards did to St. Paul : when “ from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits

¹ Acts v. 12, 15.

went out of them²." The touch of St. Paul's garments, the shadow of St. Peter's body, had such healing virtue, as before their time had been given to the hem of our LORD's garment; and in both instances the cause and spring of the healing power was the same; namely, the Touch of JESUS CHRIST. "Virtue went out of HIM," which not only healed, but gave power to heal: like the kind of stone which we have all seen or heard of, which not only draws iron to itself, but causes whatsoever iron it touches to have the same power of attracting other iron.

This power, I say, of working miracles, in consequence of the touch of the Body of JESUS CHRIST, is probably part, at least, of the meaning of the promise which our LORD made to Nathanael and Philip in the text. "Hereafter shall ye see Heaven open, and the Angels of GOD ascending and descending upon the SON OF MAN." It will, therefore, be not out of season, if I endeavour to show, first, how this was fulfilled in those very times; then, in what sense we may understand it as still receiving fulfilment in our times; and lastly, what use it becomes us to make of so wondrous and merciful a communication.

First, then, in this promise to Nathanael and the rest, there is a clear allusion to the history of the Patriarch Jacob; of whom we read in the Book of Genesis, that when he was on his way from his father's house, "he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the Angels of GOD ascending and descending on it: and, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the GOD of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed: and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of³."

Such was the vision of our father Jacob; in which we cannot well doubt that GOD prophetically showed him, in the first place, His special providence over the Jewish people, the Angels coming

² Acts xix. 12.

³ Gen. xxviii. 12—15.

and going, as we know they did, on God's special messages to them: next, and chiefly, HE showed him the same Angels, employed in the higher office of waiting on HIM, Who either in His own Person, or in His Church, is the true substance whereof Israel was but the shadow.

Our LORD, it will be observed, had just called Nathanael an Israelite; "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile;" and by that name HE had recalled the memory of the great patriarch Jacob, of whom it had been especially written, that he was "a plain," that is, a guileless man. So that when CHRIST afterwards made mention of the "Angels ascending and descending," it would not be hard for considerate persons to understand that in effect HE was saying thus: "Now is the time coming that you will see Jacob's vision fulfilled; a new and blessed intercourse is going to begin between Heaven and earth; the stairs are let down which must join the eternal world to this; ALMIGHTY GOD is ready, at the top of them, to send His Angels on His thousand errands of mercy, to His SON, incarnate and abiding among men for man's sake. And this scene of wonders will begin immediately, and will never cease while the SON OF MAN continues on any sense in earth. 'The way into the holiest of all will now be made manifest;' Heaven will be opened, and never shut again; and the blessed inhabitants will be continually passing to and fro between it and earth: and you shall see it; you with all saints shall be witnesses by faith of these things."

Such is the prophecy; and it is easy to see how it was accomplished, in the first instance, and in our LORD's abode on earth. The blessed Spirits who had announced His birth, who watched His infancy, who waited on HIM after His temptation, as they appeared to HIM also in His agony, and kept guard around His grave on the morning of His Resurrection, and stood by (apparently) when HE ascended into Heaven: so we are not to doubt that they waited on HIM, though unseen, in all His mighty and merciful works. We see that the very day after this promise was made to Nathanael, the first miracle took place; the water at the marriage in Cana was changed into wine; upon which St. John emphatically observes, "This beginning of miracles did JESUS in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory, and His Disciples believed on HIM." As if he had said, "Thus our

LORD began to show that glory which HE had told His Disciples of: and they, seeing His words so punctually accomplished, believed on HIM."

By thus supposing that the coming and going of the Angels refers especially to our LORD's miracles, we shall be able to explain the word "hereafter," which HE uses at the beginning of this prophecy. It means properly, "from this time forward:" leading them to expect that quite immediately that manifestation of the new state of things would begin: Angels had been coming and going long before, but now they were to see with their eyes visible tokens of the awful intercourse; and that without delay; and not once or twice only, but as a continued gift of God for a long time. All which we see to have been exactly accomplished, if we suppose the Angels to have been invisibly our LORD's ministers in working His miracles, as we have much reason to believe that they are in carrying on His ordinary government of the world, and in keeping up what we commonly call the course of nature. We read in Scripture of the Angel of the waters, of Angels whom the ALMIGHTY uses as spirits or winds, of ministers whom HE sends forth as flaming fire; and well may we suppose such Angels to have been at work, obeying the will and commands of their LORD in changing the water into wine, in strengthening the palsied, opening the eyes of the blind, cleansing the lepers, and the many other signs by which our LORD, the Creator of the world, showed HIMSELF Lord over the things that HE made.

One occasion we know there was, in which HE employed an Angel for cure, namely, at the pool of Bethesda, when, after the troubling of the water by one of those invisible messengers, "whosoever first stepped in was made whole of whatever disease he had." One instance we read of also, wherein HE employed the evil Angels to work His will, sending them into the herd of swine; whereby it seems to be rendered the more probable, that HE might in like manner employ the good Angels when HE was performing miracles of mercy; and that the ordering and changing of such things as health and sickness, sight and blindness, and in general of things natural, in obedience to His will, might be part, at least, of what was meant by their ascending and descending upon HIM.

Thus we see how the prophecy of the Angels coming and going in men's sight was fulfilled in our LORD's own time : but the words of it are by no means limited to that time. Our LORD's expression is, "hereafter;" namely, "from this time forward;" as though HE were speaking of a state of things which would begin presently and never have an end. It is the same word as HE employed to the chief priests, when adjured to declare whether HE were the CHRIST or no. "I am," HE said; "and hereafter ye shall see the SON OF MAN sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven:" as much as to say, that His humiliation was now quite over, and that from henceforth all we should see or hear of HIM would be so many tokens or pledges of His new and glorious condition. As the word "hereafter," in that case, means all time after our LORD's trial, even to the end of the world, so in the text it may mean all time after this conversation with Nathanael; not limited, in words at least, whatever it might be by meaning, to His mighty miracles done in His own time.

If this be so, we ought to be able to point out some sense in which the SON OF MAN might be said to abide on earth, and was considered in the prophecies as so doing, when, in fact, HE was gone away into Heaven. Neither is this hard to find out. CHRIST (in the language of Scripture) is so completely one with His Church; we are so completely one with HIM; HE is so touched by the burthen of our innocent infirmities; and is so joined to us by the communion of Saints, so present in us by His HOLY SPIRIT, our COMFORTER, that we may well apply to the Church the prophecies which speak of JESUS CHRIST; and among the rest, that which says, Angels of God should ascend and descend upon it. If Angels had to do with miracles, surely they ascended and descended on the members of CHRIST, as they had before on CHRIST HIMSELF: for we have seen what signs and wonders the Apostles wrought by the Name of the HOLY CHILD, and by the power of His SPIRIT.

But how are we to carry on the meaning of the promise, to the times after which miracles are supposed to have ended? to our own times, for example, in which, as it should seem, all the powers of Nature are going on regularly: they "continue as they were even from the beginning of the Creation." How can it be said,

that we even now may see the Angels ascending and descending on CHRIST our LORD? It may be said in this way: We and all Christians are members of CHRIST; the Church, which is His Body, composed of us all, is in a certain sense CHRIST HIMSELF; and although there are no miracles, properly so called, striking our senses, there are certain wonderful works, which CHRIST carries on in the Church by certain of His creatures; of which works, according to all that has been said, we may well enough imagine the LORD of all to have been speaking, when HE talked of Angels to ascend and descend upon HIMSELF. What are those works? They are the means of grace, prayer and the holy ordinances of the Church, and most especially the two most blessed Sacraments, Baptism and the holy Eucharist. In each of these, certain things natural, certain of what we call the powers of Nature, are employed: and we have seen that ALMIGHTY GOD in His Scriptures, speaking of what HE works in that way, teaches us often to think that it is done by Angels. So that this promise of Angels going to and fro, may be accomplished, partly at least, in the intercourse which GOD keeps up with CHRIST's members on earth, through the means of grace before mentioned.

Consider first among them the case of Prayer. I do not mean the secret occasional prayer of the heart, concerning which, as of all other private thoughts, it is written, "Thou, even Thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men:" but I mean such regular devotion, both outward and inward, as our LORD directed in His Sermon on the Mount; "Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door, and pray to thy FATHER which is in secret:" or such as the Psalmist invites us to, saying, "O come, let us worship, and fall down, and kneel before the LORD our Maker." This regular devotion, both of soul and body, the Angels can take notice of, and therefore we may well believe, according to the hints of Holy Scripture and the constant opinion of the early Church, that they take part in it; even as one of them was seen in a vision by St. John, offering incense in a golden censer, "with the prayers of all saints," upon the golden altar which was before the Throne. Therefore we may well believe that solemn prayer, especially public Church prayer, is one of the occasions on which that is fulfilled to us, which our LORD promised to His Disciples. "Heaven" is then "opened" and we may see by faith "the

Angels of God ascending and descending " upon the members of CHRIST here below.

Hear the words of a venerable writer of our Church : " Between the Throne of God in Heaven and His Church upon earth here militant, if it be so, that Angels have their continual intercourse, where shall we find the same more verified, than in these two ghostly exercises, the one Doctrine, the other Prayer? For what is the assembling of the Church to learn, but the receiving of Angels descended from above? What, to pray, but the sending of Angels upward ⁴?" We see, indeed, no miracles, nothing at least which the world would call miracles; but when we see Christians assembled together, in the name of CHRIST, and by His Apostles' authority, offering the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, we see what certifies us of Heaven being opened, as positively as the first Disciples were assured of it by the change of water into wine, and the rest of our LORD's mighty works. There HE continues the miracles which HE began in Cana: there HE manifests forth His glory: let us, His Disciples, believe on HIM.

And if Angels are present, and signs and wonders are wrought, in the ordinary assemblies of the holy Church, well may we believe the like grace to attend on the rest of her visible rites and ordinances. When Bishops, who are themselves called Angels in the New Testament, lay their hands on the baptized, imparting to them the strengthening spirit: or, on those who are called to be pastors, bidding them receive the HOLY GHOST, for some high office and work in His Church: or when they enter into a newly-built Church, and bless and hallow it with prayer, in the name of our LORD: we dare not doubt that in all these cases, true, though unseen, Angels are present;—true, though unseen, communion goes on, between the Most High God on the top of the heavenly stairs, and His Israel waiting by faith here below;—true, though unseen, miracles are wrought, if we hinder them not by our unbelief and unworthiness. For is it not a true though unseen miracle, for the laying on of a man's hand to be followed by the strengthening SPIRIT; or by such a change in the person on whom it is laid, as shall make him a true successor of the Apostles, and convey down to him the power and virtue of their

⁴ Hooker, Eccl. Pol. v. c. 23.

ministry? Is it not a true though unseen miracle, for an ordinary building to be changed, by the prayer of a Bishop, into a place where the glory of God dwells, as it dwelt in the temple of Jerusalem?

And if this be so in the other sacred rites and ordinances of the holy Catholic Church, much more surely in those two, which are the necessary foundation of all, 'being the appointed means for the participation of CHRIST HIMSELF, by virtue of which participation alone can we be sharers in these or in any other blessings. I mean the two divine Sacraments, of Holy Baptism, and the Supper or Communion of our LORD.

As to the peculiar presence of Angels, in the baptism of children especially; we know what our LORD intimated, that such have Angels of their own in Heaven, who always behold His FATHER's face; Angels of a high and glorious order, which are yet in some sense those children's own: and if they are their own, they minister unto them: and if they minister unto them, who can doubt that they do so especially in the moment of their baptism, when they are being made members of CHRIST, brought out of darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God? Baptism, therefore, is one of the chiefest occasions on which children, and such as children, may be sure of that presence of Angels ascending and descending, which our LORD promised to His Church through Philip and Nathanael: and, to be sure, no miracle can be greater, if we have faith to take Scripture at its word, than what is wrought in holy Baptism. It was wonderful enough that a man should be cleansed of his leprosy by washing in the river Jordan; but it is nothing, absolutely nothing, to the HOLY GHOST by water working the new-birth of a Christian; making him, who was born in sin, and the moment before a child of wrath, to become a member of CHRIST, clothed with His righteousness,—a child of God and of heavenly grace.

There is this difference, that the change was seen in Naaman's case, in holy Baptism it is not seen. But it is the very province and power of faith, to do away with this difference, to make us see the things which are invisible. It is nothing but want of considerate, lively faith, which prevents us from feeling, whenever we are present at a Baptism, as if we had lived in our LORD's time, and seen with our own eyes one of His greatest miracles.

Lastly, if holy Baptism, then no doubt the holy Communion of CHRIST'S Body and Blood, is another and a chief instance of our seeing "Heaven opened, and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the SON OF MAN." The SON OF GOD Incarnate is with us, in that mystery, in a manner wherein HE is not with us in any other holy service. The Angels, therefore, as the Church always believed, are there especially, joining in our prayers and praises. Indeed St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, may be well thought to tell us so in express words. He says, "Are they not all ministering spirits?" where the word "ministering" is the very same, which was used in those times to denote the solemn Liturgy, or service of the Communion; and his manner of asking the question, "*Are they not* all such?" would seem as if he were not teaching a new truth, but reminding the Christians, to whom he wrote, of a doctrine and saying well known among them;—a doctrine acknowledged also in our Communion service, as often as we profess to sing our Hymn of Glory, with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of Heaven. Doubt not, therefore, nor fear earnestly to believe, that in the holy Eucharist also Angels are present, and miracles continually wrought: for what can be a greater miracle, than that the consecrated Bread and Wine should be, to the faithful receiver, CHRIST'S Body and Blood? or that the blessing pronounced by our LORD at the beginning, should be continued, down through His Apostles and Bishops, and the priests appointed by them, and so descend, at the present day, on the bread which they break, and the cup which they bless, in His name? These, if they be truths at all, are great and fearful truths: and no corruption or irreverence of others should keep us from bowing the knees of our hearts, and humbly acknowledging such an awful presence of our LORD, any more than we should be kept from worshipping the true God, because, if we lived in India or Africa, we should see others worshipping idols.

These things will not have been considered in vain, if they give any help to any of us, in contemplating the times of the first Christians, as being, in fact, our times; the miracles, then wrought openly, as pledges of the unseen, but no less miraculous, working of God with us, in His Church and Sacraments. So may we, by God's grace, understand a little of our exceeding

blindness and danger, as many as go on wilfully in sin and imperfection, although we know that Heaven is still open, and the Powers thereof ascending and descending upon us. Rather may we all awake, with our father Jacob, and say to ourselves, night and day, "Surely the LORD is here, and we knew it not." Let us be afraid, and say, "How dreadful is this place, this kingdom of Heaven, this holy Catholic Church, of which God has made us members : this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven."

S E R M O N CLXXXV.

HOW TO MAKE MUCH OF A LITTLE.

FOR ST. MATTHEW'S DAY.

PSALM xxxvii. 16.

“ A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.”

THE Apostle St. Matthew was employed in collecting the taxes for the Roman emperor;—a gainful business, and reckoned even sure, in those days, to make men's fortunes who practised it;—when our Blessed LORD, passing by, said only two words to him, “ ‘ Follow ME:’ and he left all, rose up, and followed HIM.” He well knew what he was doing; giving up all that he had in this world, in order to take part with One who had no home, no place where HE could make sure to lay His head. Why? Because St. Matthew had full faith in what ALMIGHTY GOD teaches concerning the true value of things. He felt quite sure and certain, that it was better to have ever so little, in common with HIM who is truly called the Righteous Man, than to have the greatest estate of the richest man in the world, or all the estates of all rich men put together. The smallest thing that CHRIST had to give, was more precious to him than all the wealth of the world; and therefore he at once gave it up, and would have given it up, had it been a thousand times more, in order to be admitted into CHRIST's company.

Now this, for aught we know, might be in St. Matthew no more, at the time, than a strong sort of instinct or feeling, that

whatever else might be right or wrong, it must be right, and safe, and good, to obey all the commands of the Holy Person who was then speaking to him; to follow HIM, and give up all for His sake. He might have been watching CHRIST beforehand, and wishing secretly to be favoured with such a command; and CHRIST may have spoken to him, knowing what was in his heart. Or the call may have been altogether sudden: like the call of David from the sheepfolds, when he least thought of it, to be King over Israel. In any case, there is no reason to think that St. Matthew stood at all in doubt, balancing with himself what could be said for and against his following our LORD's invitation. He came as soon as ever he was called. He "made haste, and prolonged not the time, to keep the commandment." He took CHRIST's service, as it were, upon trial, like Abraham, not knowing whither he went. He felt, though perhaps he could not have proved, that CHRIST was that Righteous One, with whom a very little is better than the riches of all the publicans and great men in the world.

He felt this at first, and when he had really joined himself to CHRIST, no doubt every day and hour proved to him more and more that he had been in the right, that he had chosen the wise and safe course. He experienced how very far the least drop of earthly consolation and enjoyment would go, when a man was continually with the HOLY JESUS, seeing HIM and hearing His Voice.

So shall it be, even now, whenever a person closes heartily, at more or less cost of earthly goods, with the directions of JESUS CHRIST, distinctly declared to us by His Church. It may be mere good feeling, the warmth of his heart, at first; he may not be able to give any reason for it in words; but let him only go on, accompanying CHRIST and the Church in the practice of the like self-denying obedience, and there will be something he cannot mistake, which will tell him secretly, that so far as he acts thus, just so far he is in the right way; that an hour or a minute of devout prayer, or laborious charity to CHRIST's little ones, is worth a whole life of such pleasures as the world can give; and that even in sufferings, borne humbly and sincerely for His sake, there is a drop of sweetness which makes the whole draught palatable, however bitter and intolerable it may be in itself.

As we this day keep the memory of St. Matthew's deep trust in our SAVIOUR, it will not be unsuitable to call to mind some instances of this Divine power, given by the ALMIGHTY to true faith and devotion of heart: that it takes up, nourishes and cherishes, whatever is good and comfortable in our condition: makes the most of it: spreads, enlarges, ripens it, as the sun in spring time does the little flowers, which would otherwise quite wither away. While, on the other hand, there is in the love of the world, in all kinds of covetousness, a blighting, withering quality, which gradually causes the most abundant growth of prosperity to shrivel and contract and shrink into nothing. "A small thing that the righteous hath is better than great riches of the ungodly:" the largest store that the ungodly hath, is less than the least possession of the righteous.

See, for instance, in any poor cottage, where true devotion and honest industry abide, how far even very scanty wages will go towards providing the real comforts of life. It is not only that Christian patience makes them content with a little, but somehow or another, Christian prudence teaches them to make the most of that little, so that it seems to grow in their hands, and to reach further in the way of making them comfortable, than any one would have thought possible. In this, no doubt, is a secret blessing from God; but we may in part see the manner of it: we can understand, at any rate, how true religion, by making men contented, keeps them in sound hearty courage, to set about any thing which they see to be prudent and good for their families. They lose no time in complaining, languor, and idleness, but whatever their hand finds to do, they do it with all their might.

Nor is it less surprising, on the other hand, to see how irreligious ways wear out and destroy, no one knows how, if not the riches themselves of worldly men, at least all the enjoyment and pleasure that might be looked for in them. How often do we hear of great fortunes dissipated unexpectedly, and nothing, people say, to show for it all! How continually are the very richest in embarrassment, if they spend their wealth in a mere worldly way! It goes before they are aware, and they become poor, without any such blessing as is promised to those, who make themselves poor for CHRIST's sake.

This becomes still plainer, when we come down to more par-

ticulars,—to the things wherein people are supposed particularly to enjoy their wealth. “Better is a dinner of herbs, where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith.” Who would not rather be St. John in the wilderness, with the leathern girdle about his loins, and his meat locusts and wild honey, than such a wealthy king as Herod, “making a feast to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee?” In the one case, every morsel is sweetened by the thought of God’s blessing, and the comfortable hope of His approbation; in the other, the very object is to drive away all sorts of serious remembrance. *This* enjoyment cannot bear being thought of: *that*, the more you think on it, the higher it rises; for if it be really a token of God’s love, no thought can come up to it. And thus one may readily imagine, how a very little circumstance in a good man’s life may grow upon him, and cause him more happy thought, even in this world, than the greatest prosperity of a bad man.

It is the same in the matter of health and strength. A saint on a sick bed—Hezekiah turning his face to the wall and praying—shall do more, shall really exert more power to change the face of the world, than a mighty conqueror, such as Sennacherib, at the head of his army. Such an one will make the most of every little interval of comparative ease; it will be a matter of conscience to him to do so; and his minutes will often go further for the good he seeks to do, than other men’s hours for their purpose, whatever it be.

Take another instance:—One chief supposed advantage of wealth is, that it enables men to choose their company, and to abound in all social enjoyment; but one sure friend that the righteous hath, is worth all the companions of the ungodly. Elijah in the wilderness, with now and then a visit from an angel: did he not find that the remembrance of those rare moments cast a light over all his long solitary hours, which quite prevented them from being tedious? Did he ever wish himself, think you, in Ahab’s place, with his many friends and allies, and his seventy children?

Nay, and the same rule holds, not only in respect of outward things, but of knowledge also, and scholarship, and acquaintance even with divine matters. Solomon, at one time of his life, found by very sad experience, that “in much wisdom is much

grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow ;” and St. Paul “determined to know nothing among” the Corinthians, “save JESUS CHRIST, and HIM crucified :” that knowledge, which the poorest among us all may have, if he will quietly bear his lot for CHRIST’s sake ; it is not even necessary that he should know how to read.

Thus a little drop of knowledge, touched by divine grace, may swell into a sea : as the wise son of Sirach describes God’s dealings with himself : “I came out,” he says, “as a brook from a river, and as a conduit into a garden : I said, I will water my best garden, and will water abundantly my garden bed ; and lo, my brook became a river, and my river became a sea.” Because he applied himself to his immediate and nearest duty with all his heart, God blessed him with large and high knowledge, beyond all the ungodly wisdom of the world. Thus that one little point, knowing what is next to be done and resolutely doing it, will tell as much in the way of knowledge, as the widow’s mite, duly offered, in the way of riches.

Finally : such is God’s mercy on the one hand, and the perverseness of men on the other, that, even in respect of spiritual blessings also, the Psalmist’s saying holds true, “A small thing that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.” A little measure of grace well employed, and received into a heart willing to be made righteous, is better, far better, than the highest spiritual privileges, when God, in His unsearchable judgments, has vouchsafed them to unworthy persons. This is like our SAVIOUR’s saying, “Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness.” And again, “The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.” And of the ten lepers who were cleansed together, one only “returned to give glory to God,” and “he was a Samaritan.”

Here is comfort for those, who seem to be placed in less favourable circumstances than others ; less within reach of the means of grace ; farther from Churches, or with rarer opportunities of receiving the holy Sacraments. I do not deny that their loss is great : yet our LORD not doubtfully gives us to understand,

that it may be made up, though they themselves know not how, by increased and most earnest prayers and endeavours on their part. They may be like the woman of Canaan, who, although she was in the place of the dogs, yet was allowed a portion of the children's bread, because of her great faith, her persevering and humble prayer.

So then, those who are afraid because of their ignorance, provided such ignorance be not their own fault,—persons also in sickness, or old age, unable to attend Church services,—and others in like case, may be sure they have not to deal with a hard master. Their one talent, if they will apply themselves in earnest, may be so laid out as to obtain the reward of him that had five talents.

And whereas in all this there seem to be great advantages offered to those, who in the world's judgment would appear worst off; it may be well just to observe, in conclusion, that these rare blessings are held out to the rich also, if they will but reach forth their hands to take them. By fasting, and leading strict lives, they may make their bodily refreshments profit them as much, for comfort in this world, and grace in the kingdom of Heaven, as those of the patient and contented poor. When God visits them with loss of friends, or with sickness, or with any of the thousand trials to which the children of Adam are exposed, they will do well to consider, that so far they are put in the condition of the poor, or rather nearer to it, and therefore in a better place for making their portion in His kingdom sure.

And so, in all respects, it will be found in the end, that there is but one distinction really worth caring for—the distinction between those who serve God, and those who serve Him not. Of all who try in earnest to serve Him, whatever their condition, the saying is clear: "The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the Maker of them all." They meet in the Church here, and they shall meet before the Throne by and by, in virtue of their unspeakable union in Him Who is their MAKER and REDEEMER.

SERMON CLXXXVI.

ANGELICAL ORDER AND OBEDIENCE.

FOR ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS.

REV. vii. 11.

“And all the Angels stood round about the Throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts.”

THESE words represent to us in vision, that which the Church's Collect for Michaelmas-day teaches as matter of express doctrine :—the wonderful order in which the everlasting God has constituted the services of Angels and men. In His glorious and heavenly Household all beings know their place, and all but sinful beings exactly keep it : even as the Angels are here shown to the eyes of the beloved Disciple, standing in the Court and around the Throne of the Most High and everlasting King, exactly in the order which HE had set. They are around His Throne, and around His Church, gathered from mankind, which seems to be represented by the four beasts and the elders. They wait upon HIM, and, for His sake, upon His Church : not one is wanting, not one out of his station : every one is exactly where he ought to be, and does just what the ALMIGHTY would have him do.

The same vision was present, as appears, in spirit, to one of those whom we look up to, as to bright and burning lights in our own Church of England, the venerable Richard Hooker, when drawing near his end. The day after he had received the blessed Sacrament of the LORD's Supper for the last time, a friend calling on him, found him deep in thought ; and being asked the subject of his meditations, he replied, “ That he was meditating the num-

ber and nature of Angels, and their blessed obedience and order, without which, peace could not be Heaven ; and oh that it might be so on earth ⁵ !”

Such were that holy man’s thoughts of the Kingdom of Rest and Glory, to which he was so fast drawing near : and all that we read of the holy Angels seems intended, in like manner, to make us think of their perfect obedience and order. They have each their own place and station assigned, in managing the works of God, or in waiting on His Church. Thus we read of the Angels of certain elements : one having power over fire, and an Angel of the waters, are mentioned in the Book of Revelations, and so are certain other Angels, whose care was to stand at the four corners of the earth, and hold the four winds of Heaven, that they might not hurt the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, until the time that God had appointed ⁶.

Again, the book of Daniel seems to tell us of Angels belonging to particular countries ; of a Prince of Persia and a Prince of Grecia, and of Michael the great Prince, who stands up for the children of God’s people⁷ ; and our blessed SAVIOUR Himself gives it as a reason, why we should be very careful to avoid giving cause of sin to any of His little ones, that “in Heaven their Angels do always behold the Face of My FATHER which is in Heaven ⁸.” “Their Angels,” HE says ; as if each Christian had an Angel, if we may so speak, of his own ; a guardian Angel especially commissioned to look after him, and help him in the way of salvation. So the Church has very generally believed : and we read, accordingly, in to-day’s lesson, that when St. Peter, having been delivered from prison, knocked unexpectedly at the door of a house where his friends were praying for him, they thought it was his Angel.

And as the sacred Scriptures teach us, that the blessed Angels have each their appointed task in the several parts of the ALMIGHTY’S Kingdom, so the order of their stations and services, round the Throne itself of the great King, sets before us perfect obedience and order. “The Angels stand round about the Throne,” not as it may happen, but every one in his place.

Thus, in the vision of Isaiah : “The LORD was seen sitting on

⁵ Walton’s Life of Hooker.

⁶ Rev. xiv. 18 ; xvi. 5 ; vii. 1.

⁷ Dan. x. 20, 21 ; xii. 1.

⁸ Matt. xviii. 10.

a throne, high and lifted up, and His Train," that is, His Glory, "filled the Temple. Above it stood the Seraphims, . . . and one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His Glory⁹." It was the Church Service in perfection, exact regularity and full harmony.

And such, also, are the pictures presented to us in the high and wonderful visions of St. John in the Revelations. "About the Throne were four-and-twenty seats, and upon the seats I saw four-and-twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold." And, in another place: "I saw the seven Angels which stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. And another Angel came and stood at the Altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the Throne¹."

There are many such descriptions in that holy Book, all of them implying the most complete order and regularity in the heavenly services, so that the course of what is done in the Churches of CHRIST on earth, is but a faint and humble shadow of what the spirits of the just made perfect may hope then to witness and partake.

In the prophecy of Daniel, again, those blessed assemblies appear to be likened, in some sort, to the courts or judgment-seats of great kings. "The ANCIENT OF DAYS did sit; . . . thousand thousands ministered unto HIM, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before HIM: the judgment was set, and the books were opened." Now we know what reverential silence, what accurate order, is expected to be observed in the courts of kings, and in solemn assemblies held in their presence: and this may give us some notion of the grave and awful majesty, which the Saints and glorious Spirits continually maintain in His Presence, Who is the GOD of Peace and Order, not of confusion, and before Whom all are commanded to keep silence.

Now this exact order, and perfect obedience of the Angels,—the station of each in God's Temple, and the task of each in His Kingdom,—has reference, first, to the Glory of GOD; next, to the welfare and credit of His Church. "The Angels stood round about the Throne, and about the four beasts and the elders."

⁹ Isaiah vi. 1—3.

¹ Rev. iv. 4; viii. 2, 3.

Each had his appointed place, with regard both to HIM that sits on the Throne, and to the twenty-four elders, and four mysterious animals, who seem to be types of His Church and Gospel. So, throughout the Book of God, we find this double office assigned to them: they are either "before the Throne of God, serving HIM day and night in His Temple," or they are on their errands as "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation." Their holy, devotional hymns, and prayers, and contemplations, take up all the time which is not employed in charitable waiting on their brethren of mankind. But whatever honour they offer to God, whatever service they do to us all, is done according to His everlasting Law, in its own time, and place, and measure; there is neither too much nor too little of it: no encroaching by one Angel on the province of another, no neglect of his own.

Now let us not imagine that this angelic order and obedience is no more to us than a distant beautiful vision. Nay, it is both real itself, and it closely touches the duty of every one of us. Did not our LORD Himself teach us to pray, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven?" that is, that we should make the Angels our pattern, and as they worship and minister, so should we try to do here. God is so gracious as to set before us, His fallen unworthy creatures, the same two objects which take up the mind of His Angels. "Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do," we are invited, nay, commanded, to do it all to God's glory. And when we "wait on the LORD," it is to be "renewed in our wings like eagles;" strong and active wings, to bear us any whither, where is any Christian to be helped, any bad spirit to be discouraged.

Next, as the Angels all know and keep their places;—as the stars do in Heaven, to which they are sometimes likened;—as we are bidden to "lift up our eyes on high, and behold Who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number; HE calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that HE is strong in power, not one faileth:" so should the servants of CHRIST be ready, night and morning, and at all times, to answer to their names when HE, as it were, calls them over, and show that they are in their station, and willing and eager to set about their appointed tasks.

I say, “their *appointed* tasks.” As one blessed Spirit does not force himself into the portion of another, but remains content where he was placed by the Heavenly LORD and MASTER of all in common, so ought it to be in the Church and Body of CHRIST. The sheep must not intrude itself into the portion of the shepherd, nor one shepherd into that of another : each must mind his own work, as each has to bear his own burthen.

Then in the performance of that work we are not to be inventing ways of our own, but in every thing, small and great, to watch for some sign from HIM : where His will is plain, as it is, GOD be thanked, in most matters of daily duty, there cheerfully and punctually conforming ourselves to it, without asking any more questions ; where it is at first doubtful, seeking it as best we may with prayer and meditation, out of the Scriptures interpreted by the Church.

This way of prompt yet thoughtful obedience is set before us by the Psalmist, from the example of the Angels. “Praise the LORD, ye Angels of His, ye that fulfil His commandment ;”—that is, they do it at once when it is plain ;—“and hearken unto the voice of His words ;” that is, they listen devoutly to find out His will, in matters where they do not yet know it.

Again, it is a great point of true Angelical service, to take none of the glory to one’s self, but to ascribe all to HIM. Consider the Angel who showed to St. John those wonders in the end of the Book of Revelations. When the holy Apostle had heard and seen them, he “fell down to worship before the feet of the Angel.” But he said, “See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant, and the fellow-servant of thy brethren the Prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this Book : worship God.” As this is undoubtedly a caution to all Christians, not to offer to any Angel, even the highest and most blessed, any portion of that honour which is due to GOD only ; so ought we all to understand by this verse the danger of taking any praise to ourselves ; a great, and subtle, and continual danger, which is ever winding itself round us, like a poisonous plant, and spoiling the fruit of what otherwise might be our good works.

To guard against it, people should always be saying, not to others, but to themselves, “Not I, but the grace of GOD which was with me.” They should have rooted in their memories the

thought, how many bad and unworthy imaginations they have indulged in before now, all which are known to God and written in His Book. They should dwell in their minds, not on what their friends actually say of them, but on what they would say of them, if they could know their secret sins. This, I suppose, would be one way of effectually resisting the strong temptation, which many of us are continually under, to take the credit of what seems good in us to ourselves.

Another good help to the same purpose, would be to be often looking off from ourselves, and contemplating God's gracious work in the Gospel and kingdom of His Son. And in this, too, the example of the Angels may greatly help us; for even they, in their high estate, St. Peter tells us, "desire to look into" the things which the HOLY GHOST made known to the Church by the Apostles². And the manifold wisdom of God is made known by the Church, even "to the Principalities and Powers in Heavenly Places³." When therefore we look away from ourselves for a while, and let our thoughts follow the guidance of the Church, especially on her great and holy days, in meditating on heavenly mysteries, we may have the satisfaction of thinking that we are far from being alone. The Angels which stand round about the Throne are, we know, employed as we are. We are permitted for the time to have some small insight into those deeps of glory and wonder, which they, seeing God as they do with open face, yet desire to look into. This is the blessing offered us, if we would open our hearts to it, when we are invited to join in solemn Church services, more especially of thanksgiving, or to exercise ourselves at home in devout reading and meditation.

Further: the Angels, when at God's command they employ themselves in ministering to His Church, are filled with heavenly earnestness, and eager desire that His will should be done in all things. If they look towards His enemies, and see HIM affronted, His holy Name profaned, His servants vexed, His Word contradicted, and His Law disobeyed, such sights fill them with a holy zeal and indignation. According to the Epistle of the day, there is at such times "war in Heaven:" the Powers of Light and Darkness are set one against another, "Michael and his Angels fighting against the Dragon, and the Dragon fighting and his Angels."

² 1 Peter i. 12.

³ Eph. iii. 10.

And one may see by the manner of those holy warriors, as it is described in different parts of the Bible, how earnestly they enter into their warfare, like true and loyal soldiers, jealous of their KING's honour, and not enduring to see HIM disrespectfully used.

So the Angel which met Balaam speaks, as if what he did was all his own doing. "I came out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me. If the ass had not turned aside, surely now I had killed thee, and saved her alive⁴."

So, in the Book of Judges, the Angel of the LORD calls down a bitter curse on a certain place, because the inhabitants thereof "came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty⁵."

But this their zeal is ever chastened by a deep and grave sense of duty and obedience, of the presence of God, and the order and beauty of His Kingdom: so that, whereas men think, if they have but a good cause, they may let their tongues loose to high degrees of bitterness, "Michael the Archangel," we are told, when he was "contending with the Devil" himself, "durst not bring against him a railing accusation," but referred the matter to the judgment of God, saying simply, "The LORD rebuke thee⁶."

I will mention but one point more of the Angels' faithful and orderly service; their deep and most affectionate concern for the little ones of JESUS CHRIST; rejoicing in their repentance when they have gone astray, and very much displeased with those who in any way cause them to stumble and transgress. Such must be our concern for one another, if we would at all fulfil our daily prayer, and do our part of God's will on earth as the holy Angels do theirs in Heaven. We belong to a great company, which ALMIGHTY GOD has vouchsafed to gather around His Throne to serve HIM, and which HE has encompassed on every side with the guard of His holy Angels. If we would fulfil our part in that heavenly assembly, these are the two cautions we must observe. We must do all to the glory of God, yet so as to have an eye always to the good of our brethren, and to avoid causing them to stumble. We must do all to the good of our brethren, yet so as to have an eye throughout to God's glory, and to the order which HE has established.

⁴ Numb. xxii. 32, 33.

⁵ Judges v. 23.

⁶ St. Jude 9.

S E R M O N CLXXXVII.

THE COMPANION OF THE SAINTS.

FOR ST. LUKE'S DAY.

PSALM cxix. 63.

“ I am a companion of all them that fear THEE, and keep Thy commandments.”

THE Epistle for this day instructs us to think of the Evangelist St. Luke as the companion of the Apostle St. Paul, and that more especially when he was very near his end. Being in prison, and expecting before long to be martyred for his LORD's sake, St. Paul writes to Timothy to come to him, saying, that he would be quite left alone if it were not for one true friend; and that friend was St. Luke. “ Only Luke,” he says, “ is with me.”

It was no new thing for St. Luke to be with St. Paul. The Acts of the Apostles show that he had been his companion in many and great dangers, before his first imprisonment in Rome; for he continually says, “ *We* came to such a place,” “ *We* kneeled down and prayed,” “ *We* all got safe to land,” and other such expressions; by which a diligent reader may very well make out where he first joined the Apostle, and how long he continued with him.

And again, if we look into those Epistles, which we know were written by St. Paul when he was first imprisoned in Rome, we find that St. Luke was still with him; for he sends greeting from St. Luke to Philemon, and to others at a distance.

And here we find them still together in St. Paul's second im-

prisonment, and as near his death as the New Testament history gives any account of him.

Now undoubtedly this, to the eye of faith, was a very great privilege given by the ALMIGHTY to the holy Evangelist St. Luke. Even a careless, unthinking person, if he be not quite an unbeliever, will perceive and acknowledge that so it is. We are all quite ready to say, "Truly, it must have been a blessed thing to be present at the last hours of such a person as St. Paul; to be with him in prison; to hear his high and noble thoughts, as the HOLY SPIRIT opened to him more and more the true meaning of the Scriptures of God; to pray with him night and morning; to listen to his instructions; to partake with him in the Church services, and especially in the Holy Communion; and, perhaps, to be by him in the very moment of his martyrdom, when he was beheaded for the sake of JESUS CHRIST."

There is not one of us but feels, when he really thinks of this, that it was a great and blessed thing to be the companion of such a man; and, perhaps some of us may imagine that it would have made all the difference to themselves, if God had cast their lot in such company. If we had been with such persons as St. Paul, especially in their dying hours, we are apt to fancy we should never have forgotten such instructions and such an example.

But let us not be too sure. The company and example of the Saints of God, like all other spiritual and heavenly privileges, takes effect upon men according as they are prepared by their own former conduct, and disposed in their own hearts. The company and example of our Blessed LORD HIMSELF, we know, did not amend nor save Judas, because he brought to it a perverse and covetous heart, and refused to be the better for it. Yet I suppose even Judas himself, had he heard at a distance of such a person as CHRIST, at least of some parts of what HE said and did—even Judas, I say, would have admired HIM, and thought it good to be with HIM. And so it may be in the case of the Saints of CHRIST, living and dead. Many men may be touched with what they read or hear of them, and may seem to themselves as if they longed to be with them, who, if they really were brought into their company, would very soon be tired and disgusted, and long to be away from them. Many may have engaging dreams (if one may so call them) of St. Paul in prison, who would never

have profited as St. Luke did, by being companion of the blessed Apostle.

For let us consider the case more nearly. Here is a person, poor, despised, of weak bodily presence and contemptible speech, shut up in a prison, from which he has no earthly hope of escape, and out of which he is daily expecting to be led to a cruel death : and it will be a shameful death too, for he will be punished as a criminal, and most part of the people will insult him, believing him guilty. What is there in this to tempt or delight any one, except it were one who had a faith like the faith of St. Paul himself ; such a faith as could look through all this cloud of troubles to the glorious end, the crown of righteousness ?

Again, what if the Apostle spake, almost as never man spake, about the love of God to His people, and the things prepared for them that love HIM ? All this would fall dead and useless on the ears of men, taken up hitherto with the diversions, and business, and imaginations of this present evil world. To associate with him from morning to night, and hear his good and holy sayings, and observe the Christian use he would make of all things, would be but flat and wearisome work to a mind taken up with the love of this world ; a mind selfish and impatient, sensual and greedy.

To take an instance which every one can understand :—How would a mere ordinary person, a child of this world, used always to indulge himself,—how would such an one like to be with the Apostle on his fasting days ? We know that he did keep fasts ; that he restrained his body and brought it into subjection : he denied himself in many things, which the generality of men, even such as were called respectable, took freely, as of course. In such respects his company could not be very agreeable to them, however much they may have admired him on other accounts, when they heard of him at a distance.

But St. Luke had been long used to delight in the same things as St. Paul. He had been, as one may say, in training for this life of imprisonment and self-denial. When he first joined himself to St. Paul, he knew that he should have to suffer affliction, and it came on him very soon ; for the very next place they preached in, we read of St. Paul and Silas being scourged and imprisoned, and delivered only by a miracle. Thus he was used to danger, pain, and shame : he had his soul, as the Psalmist says, “ always

in his hand ;” that is, he felt continually how very uncertain his life was ; he knew he could not count on it for a moment, nor yet on any of the comforts which make life tolerable ; and thus he was well prepared to attend the Teacher, whom he had so long loved, both in prison and to death.

But if his life had been, from the beginning, a life of ease and self-satisfaction, how different would it all have seemed ! Even if his love for his friend had caused him to wait diligently on him, yet he could not have done it so effectually. His devout and affectionate purposes would have been continually more or less interrupted with thoughts of his own uneasiness. He would have missed very much of St. Paul’s good example, and of his holy and instructive words, from being so greatly taken up with himself. And much of what he did see and hear, he would not have at all understood, the Christian ways being altogether new to him.

For we may depend upon it, that as it is a hard thing to enter into the meaning of the Scriptures or of the Church, or what is called in the Bible “ the mind of CHRIST,” so it is no easy matter to understand and value the behaviour of any of CHRIST’S Saints, in such measure as they really come up to the name. There will always be things in every good man’s conduct, which will seem strange, and harsh, and unaccountable, to those who are below him in goodness. He will often keep silence where they would expect him to speak ; he will be grave where they look for encouragement from him ; composed and calm about matters, in which they think it impossible to be too eager ; and he will very often see deep meanings, and act accordingly, on occasions which they would turn from as merely trifling. In short, it must require a good deal of Christian practice, to enable a man to enter into the spirit of any one who is worthy to be followed, and really to make the most of his example.

St. Luke seems to have been a pattern of this. His whole manner of writing proves, that he answered well to David’s description of a good Churchman, one worthy to abide in God’s Tabernacle, as in other respects, so in this : that he “ made much of them that fear the LORD⁷.” *That*, no doubt, was what he looked to: he did not seek after amusing companions, nor such as would better his condition, or advance his credit and consequence in the world.

⁷ Psalm xv. 4.

Nor, even among Christians, did he seek to be with eloquent or learned persons, or persons called wise, or much followed by the people. But the one thing which he sought was this,—a heart set upon fearing God, and a life spent in keeping His commandments. Where he found that, to such an one he was presently ready to become a companion.

Or, as it is in another Psalm, “All his delight” was “in the Saints that are in the earth, and in such as excel in virtue.” Those are very sacred words, for they are spoken in the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST himself. And they show plainly what sort of company we must keep, if we would be minded like CHRIST, and approved by HIM. We must not look on things after the outward appearance; we must not be carried away with beauty, or strength, or skill, or what is called cleverness, or with learning, or with mirth and amusing ways, or with any such thing: we must always stop and ask ourselves, “Does this man fear God? Does he keep His commandments?” before we choose any to be our friend.

And, on the other hand, when we clearly see that any one is truly devout in his life and conversation, a lover of God and good men, a humble and watchful servant of CHRIST, and an obedient member of His Holy Catholic Church, we ought not to draw back from him on account of any outward disadvantages, or for any of the thousand fanciful reasons which, as weak vain mortals, we are apt to be so much governed by. St. Luke did not so withdraw himself from the great Apostle, because “his bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible.” He was superior to such childish unworthy feelings.

And this is the more remarkable, as it seems from St. Luke’s writings, and from what is told concerning him, that he was a person of more education,—higher breeding, as it is called,—than the holy writers were in general. No doubt he was a judge of good speaking, fine writing, and other such matters, and of what is beautiful and otherwise. There was a tradition among the ancient Christians, that he was a painter of no small skill. But none of these things moved him, neither outward beauty, nor ready speech, nor worldly wisdom and accomplishments; but he chose to be with St. Paul, because he saw that St. Paul was chief among those who feared God and kept His commandments. It

was not for his own pleasure, or credit, or consequence, that he joined himself to the Apostle, but for the salvation of his soul; and therefore he did not look to those things in his friend, which the world might take notice of and admire, but to his bright and pure example, and to the grace of God which was in him.

And having made his choice, he kept constantly to it. Others fell away from St. Paul's company, when times grew bad, and death seemed to draw near. Demas forsook him, as thinking himself well off in this present world; and not only Demas, but many others: for he writes, that when he first appeared on his trial before Cæsar, no man stood by him, but all forsook him. "Only Luke," he says, "is with me."

Thus we see how constant that friendship is, which is founded on the fear of God, and keeping His commandments. It fails not, for it is builded on a rock, and that rock is CHRIST; CHRIST, in whom such friends are firmly knit together, as members of the same body, and cannot, therefore, fail to have the same care one of another.

But again, we see that the Evangelist was not content with merely admiring, and loving, and following the Apostle, but that he also employed himself in many things, which did great service to the Church. He wrote that precious Gospel, which was and is his praise in all the Churches. He was sent by St. Paul on errands of charity, being chosen to go a long journey, in charge of a sum which had been collected for the Saints at Jerusalem. And as St. Paul calls him in one place "the beloved physician," so we may well believe, that the experience he had in his first profession helped him much in that charitable waiting, both on the souls and bodies of men, which belonged to him in his second and higher office of evangelist and physician of the soul.

I will mention one more circumstance in St. Luke's character, which particularly qualified him to be a companion of good and holy men, namely, the delight which he plainly took in watching and remembering their exemplary ways; making much of them, and setting them down, that they might not pass away as in a dream; and again, in observing and noting down the wonderful turns and order of God's Providence, in regard of them and of His whole Church.

Being so minded, the ALMIGHTY chose out St. Luke from

among all the Disciples, to write the Church History, from the birth of St. John Baptist to the imprisonment of St. Paul in Rome. This was a glorious privilege indeed, for one whose delight was in the Saints, or, rather, in the LORD JESUS, both in Himself, and as manifested in His Saints. And surely it is a great encouragement also, to all such as humbly and obediently apply themselves to watching and copying the examples of holy men departed; seeking praise, not for themselves, but for them, and for the God who sanctified them.

We have seen the high privileges of the Evangelist St. Luke, and how he was trained and prepared for them, and made much of them. It is a matter to be much considered, and laid to heart by every one of us. For certainly, whether we consider it or no, we are sharers, to a great degree, in those divine favours which St. Luke enjoyed; and if we are not trying to make the same use of them as he did, if we are not greatly the better for them, we must be greatly the worse.

All of us, I say, are partakers in St. Luke's privileges; I mean in the spiritual advantages he enjoyed as a companion of the fervent Apostle St. Paul. For we, too, are in a measure companions of St. Paul; we are made acquainted with him by his sacred writings, and by St. Luke's own history of him: we read and hear of him a great deal, both in school and in Church. Now, what is St. Paul to us? Why did God's Providence take order that we should so often be brought to remembrance of him, except because it was His will that we should follow St. Paul's example? Are we, generally, trying to follow it?

Again, most of us know some one or more friends, whom we believe, without any question, to be serious in God's service, trying to do all their duty. We have, perhaps, all of us, more or less, opportunities of intercourse with such persons. Let us understand that those opportunities are so many favours and privileges from GOD ALMIGHTY; they are talents, of which we must give account; if abused or hidden, they will add to the weight which will sink us down irrevocably in the day of judgment.

Why is it that people do not consider this more? why are many of us so little the better for the goodness of those among whom we live?

One reason is, I suppose, that we have not generally chosen our companions for being good, and holy, and devout. If we have lived among such, it was God's mercy that brought us near them, it was not at all our own doing. As for us, when we could choose, we became, like the heathen, "vain in our imaginations;" our foolish hearts chose out to be our friends showy, pleasant people, or people of consequence in the world; if they chanced also to be religious people, no thanks to us for it; and no wonder, therefore, if we were little the better for their friendship. Plainly, then, for the time to come, our duty is, when we have a choice, to join ourselves to none but such as really fear God. If we thus watch for heavenly goodness, and go out of our way to seek it, we shall, of course, deal reverently with it when we find it, and God in His mercy will give us a portion in it.

Next let us take care, that being their companions, we do not abuse their kindness to any worldly purpose whatsoever; any more than St. Luke made use of his friendship with St. Paul to increase his own influence in the Church. This will leave our minds free to receive all the good, which HE, by such companions, intended us.

And let us be very doubtful of our own constancy, very much afraid what might happen, if at any time our friendship with them called on us to deny ourselves severely. St. Paul had a Demas among his companions, who forsook him when danger came on: and who knows what our case might be, if tribulation and persecution arose for our LORD's sake? It is one thing to be with good men, and enjoy their sweetness and kindness, and admire their noble thoughts and Christian wisdom, when all seems quiet and easy around; and it is quite another thing to stand by them, and cleave to their good ways, when it brings reproach and self-denial, poverty, and pain, and toil, and perhaps even danger.

To prepare us, therefore, for such severer trials, let us be very attentive to the ways in which they are preparing themselves. Let us carefully notice how they use silently to prefer other persons' pleasure and profit to their own; how they give up their own opinions, submit to affronts, refuse to have their own ways: and let us be sure that what they do in secret in thus inwardly

disciplining themselves, is a great deal more than what they do in our sight. GOD ALMIGHTY sees in them very many self-denials and restraints, which none of us can know any thing of.

We are too much used to say, "I love and admire such an one, and I wish I could be like him; but I *cannot*, it is not in my nature." The true way is to say little about them, but to think and pray a great deal; and to copy, as we may in little things, their humble and holy ways, that the world may not prevail against us, and separate us from them, when great occasions arise.

One thing more: we must be on our guard, that we sin not, before we are aware, in idolizing these, the earthly members of our LORD; thinking on them, and depending on them, when all our thoughts and trusts ought to mount up to HIM, Who is their Head and ours. Our knowledge of holy men, living and dead, should ever lead us back to JESUS CHRIST, such as HE manifested Himself on earth; even as St. Luke's intimacy with St. Paul qualified him to write his Gospel. Let it be our labour in this world to please HIM by following His Saints, and it shall be our joy and crown of rejoicing, in His Presence, at His coming.

SERMON CLXXXVIII.

INWARD MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST.

FOR ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE.

JOHN xiv. 22.

“Judas saith unto HIM, (not Iscariot,) LORD, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?”

THIS verse contains one of the very few notices found in the Gospels, of St. Jude, one of the Saints of this day, and author of the short epistle, part of which you have just heard. Of St. Simon, the other Saint of the day, nothing at all is told us in the New Testament; only his name appears in the lists of the Apostles, with an addition, Simon the Canaanite, or Simon Zelotes; so called, because he was in some sense or other remarkable for his zeal and earnestness in the cause of ALMIGHTY GOD.

It is, and so most likely it will be to the end, a great secret, why so little is known of these and others of our LORD's favoured Apostles. Their names, indeed, are preserved to us, but, in other respects, they seem almost to have perished as though they had never been.

I say, they *seem*,—for, in fact, we know not how much we owe to them;—how much of the treasure of holy knowledge and good example, which the Church is gathering for her children, age after age, came, in the first place, under the HOLY GHOST, from some of those whose names are so nearly forgotten. To show

what I mean : suppose St. Jude's question, in the text, had not been set down in the Gospel, but only our LORD's answer, in the next verse, it would still have been equally true that St. Jude gave occasion to that gracious answer, though we should not have known that we are at all indebted to him for it.

Besides, we cannot tell in what thousands of mysterious ways those holy men may have done us good, or may be doing it even now ;—us, or our friends, or the whole Church of God. The Members of that holy Church, living and dead, are so wonderfully linked together, and do in such measure rejoice and sorrow one with another, that we never may dare to believe ourselves unconnected with any believer in CHRIST, past, present, or to come : nor shall we know, till the last great day, whom we are to thank as instruments of God's saving mercies.

This seems to make it the more inexcusable, if we do not thankfully apply ourselves to consider the few scattered accounts, which yet remain, of the holy sayings and doings of those favoured men : as, for example, this of St. Jude, in the text. What was the occasion and purpose of the question which he here puts to our LORD ? and what may we learn of it, which, by God's blessing, may sink deep into our hearts, and do us good for ever ?

Our LORD, in His last comfortable discourse, had just been warning His holy Apostles, that His going away, contrary to outward appearance, would be the greatest of blessings for them. " Yet a little while," HE said, " and the world seeth ME no more : but ye see ME. Because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in MY FATHER, and ye in ME, and I in you. He that hath MY Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth ME : and he that loveth ME shall be loved of MY FATHER, and I will love him, and manifest MYSELF unto him."

Such was our SAVIOUR's gracious promise : giving them to understand, that in some high and wonderful way, they, His chosen friends, would be the better and happier even for His departing out of their sight ; that the farther HE should be from them, in a worldly sense, the nearer they would find HIM in a spiritual sense. No doubt it caused them to muse very deeply, what this departure might be, and why it should be necessary.

Their weak hearts, it may be, revolted from the change which His Words seem to foretel, with a sort of indistinct feeling, that, however blessed that change might be, they would, at the bottom, be well content to let things alone,—to remain in outward and visible society with HIM.

It might be something of the same sort of feeling, with which even good men, generally speaking, appear to receive intimation of their own approaching death, or of the death of some dear friend. They doubt not of the mercies which God has in store, but over them, as yet, there hangs a cloud, and they would be thankful, could they be sure of it, to remain a while longer as they are.

Thus, when St. Jude said to our LORD, “How is it that THOU wilt manifest THYSELF unto us, and not unto the world?” we may, perhaps, understand him to mean, “What need of this change, which Thy words seem to signify? Why remove this, Thy bodily Presence, from us, of which the world can take notice? we know not how to be happy without it.”

If we so understand the Apostle’s words, we shall see that our LORD’s answer completely satisfies his doubt. “If a man love ME, he will keep MY words: and MY FATHER will love him, and WE will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” It is the great privilege of Christians, whereof HE speaks: that HE, though absent in sight, is yet, in deed, more immediately present with His Saints, than if HE had remained in their sight; coming with His FATHER to dwell in their hearts and bodies, by the wonderful working of His holy and almighty SPIRIT.

St. Jude, then, and the rest of the Apostles, were not to be cast down at His departing out of their sight; they were to rest assured, that by Faith HE would be nearer them than ever. And not to them only, but to all Christian people;—all who have not forfeited the blessing given them in their Baptism. For HE says not, “If *you*, MY own Apostles, love ME, and keep MY Words;” but, “If *any man* love ME, and keep MY Words.” All Christians, all members of CHRIST, have this wonderful Promise and Gift,—the FATHER and the SON coming to them, and making their abode with them.

This gracious assurance St. Jude obtained, for himself and for

us all, by inquiring of our LORD, in faith and affection, why it was necessary that HE should go out of sight, and manifest HIMSELF hereafter to His Apostles only, not to the world.

Now it is very much to be observed, in what manner and order our LORD teaches us to seek from HIM this greatest of blessings, the abiding presence of the Most Holy Trinity, to Whom we have been joined in our Baptism. HE does not say, "If a man knows the Gospel thoroughly, and can give a good account of it in words;" nor, again, does HE say, "If his feelings be very strong about his own unworthiness, and the power of the Blood of CHRIST, then this heavenly communion will be his;" but HE says, "If he *love* ME, he will keep My Words," and so the blessing will come to him. He will not feel it, nor know it, except by his obedience: just as our bodily life is felt and known, only by our doing the deeds of a living man.

This seems to show how we ought to deal with ourselves, in regard to all the great things and wonderful secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven. They were none of them intended to be secrets for ever: on the contrary, our SAVIOUR HIMSELF says of them, "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither is any thing kept secret, but that it should be known and come abroad." Not, however, all at once, nor any how, nor to all sorts of persons, but in due order, manner, and time, and to those who are fitly prepared.

Do we, then, desire to know, as St. Jude did, why or how our LORD and SAVIOUR manifests HIMSELF to His Church, and not to the world? We must take that method of study which HE HIMSELF has pointed out to us: we must practise ourselves, night and day, in loving HIM and keeping His Commandments: then the blessing itself will be always with us, and the knowledge and understanding of the blessing will follow in due time.

For example: we wish perhaps to know and understand, what that great thing is, which the Church continually offers to us in the Holy Sacrament of the LORD'S Altar: and some of us, perhaps, are uneasy about going in ignorance, and think it would be more their duty to go, and the blessing would be greater, if they understood it all more clearly. But this might or might not be so: for the blessing does not, in the least degree, depend on the

clearness of our understanding, but on our coming with an honest and good heart, and with very deep and earnest religious fear.

Again, we hear and read wonderful things of Holy Baptism, and would like to know more of it; would like to be instructed, how it should make so great difference in the condition of a little infant, and turn him from a child of wrath to a child of grace. Well, there is but one way of knowing: watch, pray, strive continually to keep the promise and vow which you then made, and God will, by and by, open your eyes, to see the great work which the HOLY GHOST has been working in you, more plainly than ever the children of Israel saw the pillar of fire and of the cloud guiding them safely out of Egypt. I say, by and by, that is, in the other world; in the day wherein the SON OF MAN, and all His gracious dealings with us, shall be revealed. For it should seem, that until then we cannot be made holy enough to receive this high and heavenly knowledge: and when that day comes, the knowledge God will give us will not be the same to all, but measured out to each person, in proportion to nothing else but to his love of CHRIST, and zeal in keeping His Words.

Whichever way, therefore, we look at the matter, all comes back to the same thing, that is, holy and Christian obedience. That is the mind to which CHRIST will manifest Himself, and not at all to the world,—not at all to those who continue in unfaithfulness and sin, and less and less to those, who having been once near HIM, (as in our childhood we all were,) are falling away into an impenitent state. For, as the Evil One “goes about continually, seeking whom he may devour,” so, and much more, does our LORD and SAVIOUR go about continually, seeking whom HE may save. Hear His own gracious words: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with ME:” that is, “if he love ME and keep My words, there will be secret heavenly communion going on between him and ME,” beyond what words can express, or thought of man’s heart understand in this world.

Let no person, then, be out of heart, because he is poor, weak, and ignorant, and hears great things when he comes here, which he cannot go along with or understand. Let him but go steadily

on, loving CHRIST, and keeping His word, and he is in a sure way to know the meaning of all, in a happy experience, for ever.

But there is another part of this subject which must also be very much thought of. What if any person, having been made partaker of the Unspeakable Gift, fall away afterwards, and leave off loving CHRIST, and keeping His Word: what is to become of him? Surely, the contrary of the blessing promised to the obedient. As our LORD promises to the obedient His FATHER's love, and that "the FATHER and the SON will come unto him, and make their abode with him;" so we must understand HIM to tell the disobedient, that he will be hated of the FATHER, and the FATHER and the SON will depart from him and leave him to himself. And if the heavenly Inhabitant depart, the Evil Spirit will return and dwell there again, with "seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and the last state of that man will be worse than the first."

I say, this must be very much thought of, because we all, having by Baptism been made members of JESUS CHRIST, are in danger of bringing on ourselves this worst of evils. We shall certainly do so, if we do not go on humbly and constantly loving and obeying HIM *in all things*. It is not our once or twice having had good impressions, and seeming to ourselves to close heartily with the gracious offers and holy commandments of the LORD; it is not this which will save us, but watchfulness, and constancy, and humility. To judge of the greatness of our danger, consider this which follows. St. Jude, the Apostle, in answer to whose question these gracious promises were made, afterwards, as you know, wrote an Epistle: one of those portions of the New Testament, which are supposed to have been written latest, and when there had been sad experience of Christians forgetting their holy vows, forfeiting God's grace, and falling away for ever. Now throughout this short Epistle we find him most earnestly pressing on us, in many and various ways, this one thought: What a thing it must be for a Christian, one brought so very very near to God, to lose himself after all, or be cast away! As the words declaring the Unspeakable Gift had doubtless sunk deeply into his heart, when he first heard them pronounced, so he had a deeper sense than others of the unspeakable misery of forfeiting that gift. The Israelites in the wilderness, Sodom and Gomorrah, Cain, Balaam,

Korah, and more especially the fallen Angels, are mentioned by him as types and examples, to show us what is thought in Heaven of wicked Christians, of disobedient lustful men, who have been joined to our LORD. It is as if he could not find histories or parables dreadful enough to express the greatness of such men's fault, or the horrible punishment which must ensue.

Now when we compare this awful tone of his Epistle with the exceeding mercy and condescension of the promise made to him, ought it not to instruct us to fear GOD more, in proportion as HE is more merciful to us? The world, to which CHRIST hath not manifested HIMSELF, lieth, we know, in wickedness, and will perish for ever; how much more we, to whom HE hath come, in whom HE vouchsafes to abide, if we go on "feeding ourselves without fear," receiving His tokens without keeping His words!

SERMON CLXXXIX.

PRAISE TO GOD FROM ALL SAINTS.

FOR ALL SAINTS' DAY.

REVELATION xix. 5.

“ And a voice came out of the Throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear HIM, both small and great.”

CONSIDER what GOD is ; how infinitely above the highest Angels ; the only Fountain of goodness, and life, and immortality, and whatsoever is blessed and glorious, either in Heaven or in earth. Consider again what we are ; mortal, sinful, unworthy creatures ; such, that in His infallible Word the title *man* seems to be taken, over and over again, as a sort of proverbial expression, for whatever is weakest and most worthless. Does it not almost seem, as if we might well be afraid to praise HIM ? As if it were a presumptuous, irreverent thing, so much as to take His Name within our lips, or to make mention of HIM at all ? Even as it would be a kind of improper liberty, for a criminal, in hopes of being pardoned beyond his deserts, to begin praising and commending the Judge, as though it were his place to pass any kind of sentence upon his superior ?

But ALMIGHTY GOD, by His infinite condescension in Holy Scripture, encourages us not to keep silence. HE declares HIMSELF ready to accept our praise and thanksgiving, as a sacrifice of a freewill offering. Nay, and HE has graciously provided against our many misgivings in this matter, giving us one whole book of Scripture—the Book of Psalms—as a pattern and example of the

thoughts which Christians should have in their hearts, and the words which they should bear on their lips, when they come to praise HIM.

Here also in the text, we find His approbation yielded, in a very remarkable manner, to the duty and blessing of praising HIM, as it has been understood and practised from the beginning by all Saints. In the course of St. John's wonderful vision, when the final glory and victory of CHRIST and His Church began to draw near; when great Babylon, the power of this world, and the bitter enemy of the Church, was on the very point of falling; then "a Voice came out of the Throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear HIM, both small and great."

What Voice was that? It was the Voice of GOD, for it came out of the Throne; out of the unapproachable glory, where none but GOD was.

It was the Voice of the LAMB of GOD, of HIM who is set down in glory on His FATHER's right hand, having been slain, and redeemed us to GOD by His Blood. We know it is His Voice, from the manner in which HE speaks: "Praise *our* God, all ye His servants;" not *your* GOD only, but *our* GOD: for so HE most graciously instructed us all to join ourselves in a manner to HIM, whenever in our thoughts we present ourselves before the ALMIGHTY FATHER of all. "I ascend," HE said, "unto My FATHER and your FATHER, and unto My GOD and your GOD." In like manner, here at the very end of the New Testament, HE speaks from His everlasting Throne to the whole Church, now represented as triumphing over her enemies, and makes HIMSELF One, in the work of praising GOD, not with His Apostles only, to whom the message came after His Resurrection, but also with all GOD's servants, and all who fear HIM, of all sorts and degrees, "both small and great."

The occasion, indeed, on which in vision these words were spoken in the Prophet's hearing, has not yet taken place. The fall of Babylon, the overthrow of the power of this wicked world, may, for aught we know, be yet at a distance. But it is sure, by the word of Prophecy; and the Church by Faith looks forward to it day by day. And this day of All Saints, coming yearly, is one token and exercise of her Faith.

As often as the day comes, it reminds CHRIST's faithful people,

that we are so much nearer the end and crown of our hard warfare against the kingdom and power of the evil one : so much nearer that day, when those who now surround us unseen, and wish and pray for us at a distance, shall be openly revealed to our bodily eyes, “ at the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST with all His Saints.”

Then shall our SAVIOUR cause us to understand the mystery of His Communion with His Saints, as in their warfare and sufferings, so in their glorifying and praising God for their victory and deliverance. But as yet we see not, nor understand, but only believe.

And not only on this day, but as often as we praise God in the solemn services of His Church, we do in a manner rehearse and practise the mystery of this invitation of the LORD to His servants. Every time we come here, we answer, according to our poor weak measure, the call from the “ everlasting Throne, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear HIM, both small and great.”

First, you cannot well, any of you, be ignorant, that one great business of the Church Service is, “ to render thanks for the great benefits which we have received at God’s Hand,” and “ to set forth His most worthy praise.” The Confession, Absolution, and LORD’S Prayer, may be regarded as making up a kind of private introductory service. The very first thing, therefore, in the public service, properly so called, is for the Minister to say, “ O LORD, open Thou our lips;” and for the people to answer him, “ And our mouth shall shew forth Thy praise;” and then they proceed immediately to praise the Most High God, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, in the Hymn of Glory, which, as you know, they repeat also at the end of every Psalm.

The Psalms themselves, and the Hymns after the Lessons, commonly take up at least one fourth of the time appointed for offering up our devotions to God in His Church.

Thus we try to obey the Voice which calls to us out of the Throne, “ Praise our God, all ye His servants.” And we have the comfort and privilege of knowing, that HE is with us, Who hath promised to be “ where two or three are gathered together in His name.” HE is with us, Who even from the Throne of His glory condescends to speak to us of God as *our* God ; making

HIMSELF thereby still one of us, and seeming to promise, that HE will offer up our praises as well as our prayers to His FATHER's Throne.

Let no man, therefore, be cast down, should there be but two or three present at any time, in these our assemblies. Let the Church look never so desolate, let the answer of the congregation to the voice of praise sound never so faintly to our outward ears, JESUS CHRIST we know is there, and will offer those praises, with the praises of all Saints, before the Throne of the ever blessed FATHER; provided we bring them to HIM humbly, with a reverent, faithful, and obedient heart.

That is the great point; a reverent and obedient heart; a heart full of sincere desires to honour God, and keep His commandments. He who brings that with him into the congregation, need not be cast down, if he fail sometimes, nay often, either in hearing or in understanding the Psalms and other Hymns, which the congregation with mingled voices are presenting to the God of Heaven.

It is sometimes, I believe, no small trouble to well-meaning persons, of weak and tender spirits, when they either cannot understand or cannot hear the praises of God in His house. For such the Church has done all in her power, by appointing the holy Psalms to be used regularly, which most men know how to read, and those who do not, by diligent attendance may learn to follow with much edification. And where, from deafness or great weakness, a person is shut out from this benefit, it will be a great charity to comfort such a person, concerning his coming into the congregation, and to explain to him, that he is far from being shut out of that spiritual blessing, which they enjoy who sing with the understanding. His coming with a simple purpose to praise the LORD; his joining with a hearty mind in what little he can understand and hear; his taking patiently and sweetly the irksomeness of listening without hearing, and hearing without understanding:—these are so many good signs, that he sings praises with the SPIRIT,—with the good SPIRIT of God; and so offering thanks and praise, he shall undoubtedly be accounted as honouring God.

But whether for such an one, or for others outwardly more favoured and enlightened, one thing is needful to their reaping

this blessing by their praises ; and that is, as the Psalmist teaches, that they “ order their conversation right.” No others can praise HIM acceptably ; no others are invited to praise HIM by the Voice from the Throne. “ Praise our God, *all ye His servants,*” says that gracious but awful voice. *His servants* only are privileged to praise HIM ; that is, as we should call them, *His slaves* ; those who have given themselves up to HIM *entirely* ; who try to have no will but His ; who give up what else would please them best, when they understand it to be displeasing to HIM, and take joyfully affliction, labour, self-denial, when HE lays it upon them, and would prepare them thereby for His heavenly Kingdom.

To this course of life you have all become bound in your Baptism ; when the sign of the Cross was made in your forehead, you were marked for the rest of your life to be a servant and soldier of JESUS CHRIST. If you would know what this profession comes to, look not to the careless easy lives of the ordinary sort of Christians ; look not to any living, any modern examples, but go back to those whose memories we celebrate to-day ; consider the blessed Saints of old, Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs, Confessors, of whom the world was not worthy ; and even in them look not so much to their last triumphant sufferings, to their enduring of sharp pains of the body, banishment, martyrdom itself ; but rather consider their regular behaviour in quiet times, and in the ordering of every day : watch them, with Daniel, on their knees, three times in every day praying towards God’s holy altar ; or rising at midnight, with David, to “ give thanks to HIM because of His righteous judgments :” see how thoughtful they were, with holy Job, for their families, children, servants, all who depend on them, no less than for themselves, offering the sacrifice of prayer and intercession for them all, day after day ; observe their knees, like St. James’s, worn hard with prayer, their bodies, like St. Paul’s, kept under and brought into subjection ; take notice, how when first the blessed COMFORTER came down from Heaven to establish His holy Church, they who were touched by His sacred fires counted none of their possessions their own, but renounced them all, parted with them all for CHRIST’s sake, and were content to live, with the rest of CHRIST’s poor, on a daily allowance out of the funds of the Church : consider these things, and you

will have some understanding what it is to be really a *slave* of CHRIST, and so to have part in this His invitation to praise HIM ; you will see what contempt of the world, what noble carelessness about yourself, what humble devotion, what unwearied charity, you ought to be continually trying to practise, if you would come here and praise God not altogether unworthily.

Nor let any one Christian draw back in indolence or timidity, as if he, for one, had no part in this merciful invitation of our SAVIOUR. Observe with what encouraging words he concludes it : “ Praise our God all ye His servants, and ye that fear HIM, *both small and great.*” Fearing God is the great thing ; and they who have that in their hearts, how unequal soever in other respects, may come here with all Saints, and unite in praising HIM. The free and unbounded mercy and grace of ALMIGHTY God in this respect is shown forth by this circumstance in the services of His Holy Catholic Church ; that her doors are thrown open to all. In this place, if no where else, all ranks and degrees are equal. The rich and the poor meet together, the LORD their common MAKER being here to receive their common acknowledgments. The young and the old meet together, offering to HIM, of whom the whole family is named, the one their first fruits, the other the gathered stores of their whole lives. Here, standing before the same altar, and joining in the same psalms and hymns of thanksgiving, are both the new penitent and the confirmed servant of CHRIST : he whose heart God has just touched with bitter thoughts of privileges abused, vows forgotten, warnings slighted, grace received in vain ; and he who having, by the help of God’s Spirit, kept in some good measure his baptismal vows, comes rejoicing in the sunshine of God’s mercy, with the overflowing of a thankful heart ; the experienced saint and the young beginner ; the solitary student and the just and fair man of business ; Lazarus and Zacchæus ; Mary and Martha ; the aged who feels how near the church is to the grave, and the child who can but just have a thought of something awful in this place, making it unlike other places ;—behold, here they meet altogether, with one voice praising one God, through one MEDIATOR, by one SPIRIT ; exhibiting to the very outward eye the true figure and emblem of that communion and fellowship, in which they are inwardly and spiritually knit, as true

members of the mystical body of the SON of GOD, our LORD JESUS CHRIST. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; but ye are all one in CHRIST JESUS."

And well may we believe, that the greatest differences belonging to this present world are done away in God's sight, by the common participation of such heavenly and divine grace, since Holy Scripture teaches further, that a much greater difference, a much wider mark of separation than any of these, is done away with by the grace of the Gospel. It unites not only young and old, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, penitent backsliders and aged men sound in faith, but it also has the gift of uniting the living with the dead,—the living, warring, hard-working, imperfect saints, with those who are at rest in Paradise, and wait only to be made perfect in Heaven. For the Saints in Paradise are unquestionably in the number of those who fear God, that is, who are aware of His awful unspeakable presence, and own HIM with a deep reverential joy: they, therefore, as well as we on earth, are invited by the Voice from the Throne to praise God. And they do in a manner praise HIM, doubt it not, with us in our solemn assemblies. Why else, throughout the visions of St. John in the Book of Revelation, are they represented as bearing a part in the blessing, honour, glory, and worship rendered from time to time, in the Apostle's hearing, "unto HIM that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the LAMB," by "every creature that is in Heaven and in earth and under the earth?" And why are "white robes given unto them," but to signify their greater advancement and perfection in the same holy joy, which we are feebly endeavouring to practise, when we sing hymns on earth?

Therefore the Church, in that ancient and most beautiful hymn, which sometimes comes in the place of the "Te Deum," and which begins, "O all ye works of the LORD,"—the Church, I say, in that hymn, does not scruple, amongst other works of God, to call on the faithful departed to join her in thanking and praising HIM. "O ye spirits and souls of the righteous, bless ye the LORD, praise HIM and magnify HIM for ever." Indeed, why should she scruple? since the Bible expressly tells us, that when we sing daily to the Most High, "Holy, holy, holy, LORD GOD

of Sabaoth," we are doing that which the Angels in Heaven cease not from doing day and night. And none can doubt, that in Paradise, which is no place of silence, but full of unspeakable words, the like praises are given to the same Divine Being; else would the Church on earth be more like Heaven than Paradise itself; and it would not be better to depart and to be with CHRIST: contrary to St. Paul's words.

Wherefore the Church, from very early days, has added to the angelic hymn, "The glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs,"—all join to praise and "acknowledge Thee" with "the holy Church throughout all the world." And thus it comes to pass, that the humblest poor man of us all, resorting in faith to this service, may know, for a certainty, that he is bearing a part in the same choir with St. Peter and St. Paul, and all the holy men from the beginning. The least in the kingdom of Heaven, when praising God in Church, may thankfully feel his communion with the greatest and most angelic.

Yet more: he may feel his communion with our LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself; who, as Head and Priest of His Church, is ever present to gather in one, sanctify and offer up the praises and thanksgivings of His Saints in earth and in Paradise; and to make them, after a manner, his own praises and thanksgivings; even as His words in the text, saying to His people, "Praise *our* God," cannot but mean that HE too, takes part in that praise, as HE does by His intercession in our prayers.

Of this merciful privilege, to be vouchsafed to His Church afterwards, HE gave a remarkable sign and token, by that paschal hymn, which HE sang with His Disciples the night before His death, just as they were rising from the table of the Last Supper, and going out into the Mount of Olives. Who can say what power and virtue was in the Voice of our Blessed LORD, so offered up to His FATHER, to sanctify the Church's continual offering of psalms and hymns, sung or said, evening and morning, ever since there was a Church, wherever the name of CHRIST is named?

Those psalms and hymns, and our other forms of thanksgiving, are indeed CHRIST's, and not ours; for they are offered in the name, not of individuals, nor of this or that particular congrega-

tion, but of that body whereof CHRIST is the head, and which can do nothing without CHRIST.

Remember, then, (the thought is an awful one !) that whenever you sing or say a psalm in this place, you are singing or saying it, not with the saints only, but with CHRIST : and think what profanation it must be, if to that work you bring a voice used to any kind of bad words,—a mind impure, covetous, selfish, unforgiving, irreverent, or in any respect contrary to the known mind of CHRIST. Let us humble ourselves before God for all our sins in this kind, for surely we have great need ; and let us seriously implore His grace, that we may so watch our own hearts and ways, as not to provoke HIM when we come here to join His Saints in praising His FATHER through HIM : but, rather, to make every psalm such an exercise of holy reverence and love, as we may hereafter hope to rehearse more perfectly, when “ they that fear HIM, both small and great,” shall see HIM and one another face to face in His heavenly Kingdom.

S E R M O N C X C .

CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOUR IN HARVEST ¹.

RUTH ii. 4.

“ And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee.”

ALL times and seasons have their peculiar trials : in every one of them God is proving His people, in every one of them the Evil One is watching to ruin them : for every one the Bible in the hand of the Church is a sure and sufficient guide. And among the rest, no doubt this time of harvest, coming round by God's Providence every year, and continuing commonly for many weeks ;—no doubt this also has its particular dangers, its own special trials and temptations, for all who are any way concerned in it. And who is not concerned in it, either as owner of crops, or as a labourer, or at least as a receiver and consumer of God's bounty so poured out on us ?

Now, then, that we are about, by God's blessing, to begin gathering in the fruits of this present year, it may be well to consider seriously, seriously as before God, some of the duties and trials of the time of harvest. And to what part of holy Scripture can we so naturally turn, as to the beautiful history of Ruth ? That history is in fact an account of God's gracious Providence,

¹ Preached in 1843.

blessing both rich and poor, a wealthy man and a poor widow, for their good and religious use of the time of harvest. I suppose it would be quite true to say, that whoever will keep in his heart, and practise, the good examples, and hints of God's pleasure, which are found throughout this short book of Ruth, that man, as far as his part goes, will surely win a blessing on whatever harvest he is concerned in. Which of us would not give a great deal, at this moment, to be sure of a blessing on the harvest, which is now just beginning, after so long delay? Is not this the very thing which has made us all so anxious for so many weeks, not to say months? Well, here is the way to make sure of that blessing: here is the relief and cure of that anxiety. See how the faithful servants of God, with whom we are sure He was of old,—see how they began and ended their harvest: do you the same, and you will be favoured as they were.

First, and above all, remember always that your harvest can have no blessing except it be begun and ended in the fear of God. Look at the picture which the text sets before us: the picture of a harvest-field near Bethlehem, in the beginning of barley harvest,—which in that country, as in some parts of our own, comes before wheat harvest,—twelve or thirteen hundred years before the birth of JESUS CHRIST. The reapers have entered on the field, and the gleaners have begun gleaning after them: and behold the master comes out to see the work. Boaz comes from Bethlehem, and says to the reapers, "The LORD be with you," and they answer, "The LORD bless thee." See here a beginning made in the fear of God. The master blesses the men, and the men the master. It is like our Church Service, where the Priest and the people mutually pray for one another: "The LORD be with you," "And with thy spirit." And indeed, perhaps, that very verse and response was in the first place taken from this simple salutation of Boaz and his reapers. They little thought, when with kind and devout hearts they so bade good day to each other, that they were setting a pattern for a holy service, which the Church of God, guided by His SPIRIT, would take up from them and use for ever. Yet so it is; they have somewhat of the same honour given them as David in the Old Testament, the Blessed Virgin, Simeon, Zacharias, and others in the New: the honour to have their words appointed to be used by all Christians in their solemn

offices of praise and thanksgiving: one of the greatest honours, surely, on this side the grave.

“The LORD be with you,” said Boaz: and it was a salutation well fitted for one coming as he did from Bethlehem. For Bethlehem was, in the counsels of GOD, in many respects, a holy place. It was the place where David was; where he was anointed; where he kept his sheep; where no doubt he wrote many of his Psalms. Above all, it was the place ordained for the birth of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST; and therefore its very name was, by GOD’s Providence, made to set forth a high and peculiar grace. For Bethlehem means “the House of Bread:” that is, the birthplace, and partly the home, of HIM who is the true Bread from heaven, of whom whosoever eateth shall live for ever. Bethlehem is a figure of the Church, for the Church is the true House of Bread. In the Church the SON of GOD, the Living Bread, is “verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the LORD’s Supper.” When I read, therefore, of Boaz coming from Bethlehem among his reapers, it puts me in mind of a Christian husbandman, beginning the season of harvest by worthily receiving the Holy Communion, and then going out cheerfully into his field, overlooking his sheaves, and directing his men, in good hope of a blessing on his labours, because such an one will have a firm trust in GOD’s goodness, and a full purpose to do right, by His grace, in all trials, little and great.

Boaz had such thoughts of GOD; for we see how kind and good and charitable he was to the destitute young widow, Ruth, who, as GOD’s Providence had ordered it, was gleaning in that very field. When he found who she was, he told her to take her portion with his work-people, showed her all kindness himself, and charged them to be kind to her also. And because she was a young person, and he was not only charitable but considerate, he told her to keep fast by his maidens, charged the young men that they should not disturb her, and commanded them to let her glean freely without reproach or rebuke: and indeed his whole behaviour towards her showed him to be both pure and wise of heart. And there are tokens that his servants were such as might be expected from so good and considerate a master: they cheerfully reply to his salutation; “The LORD bless thee,” like

persons who were glad to see him among them : and it is clear that they attended to his commands regarding Ruth : they kept themselves in order when he was out of sight, otherwise she would not have gone on, as she did, gleaning in his fields to the very end of the harvest.

Such was the harvest-field of that good and faithful Israelite, and see how great was the blessing of God upon it. He obtained Ruth to be his wife, a most pure, devout, affectionate, self-denying person ; and by her he became the great grandfather of David, and the ancestor of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. That great happiness and honour he would have entirely forfeited, had he behaved, as too many would have done in his place, either rudely, scornfully, or cruelly.

I would that the harvest-fields of Christian owners, having Christian labourers at work in them, were oftener ordered after this sacred pattern. For, if you observe it, this history contains what may warn us against all the most ordinary temptations of this employment and this time of year.

There is a temptation, first of all, to forget God, in anxious forethought, or in hard work. For many weeks on from about this time, you will be, many of you, up early and late, your minds and hearts set upon your work ; every minute will seem to be wanted, and you will be greatly tempted either to forget your prayers, or to say them over in a hurried disrespectful way. Then you will be so exhausted with the week's work, that even when Sunday comes, you will too readily make some excuse why you need not come to God's house. It is a sad truth, that the Church is generally more neglected, even on Sundays, when harvest is going on, than during the rest of the summer ; and yet one would think that we should all feel, that that is a time when we need an especial blessing. There may be some plea for this perhaps in some cases, when people's work has been very hard : but in any case take care, I beseech you, and watch yourselves, lest you find at the end of these harvest weeks, that you are become more heathenish, harder and profaner in heart, than you are now. You will do so of course, if you are not on your guard. Six weeks or two months of continual pressing care about a worldly task, disturbing prayer, and leaving no leisure for good books :

—how can one go through such a time and not be the worse for it, without God's special grace? and how can this be had, but by earnest prayer and communion?

But look at Boaz: he remembered God in the field; much more, you may be sure, did he remember Him in the sanctuary. He used the Lord's Name to bless his people; how should that holy Name come out of his mouth to curse them? No anger, no sense of ill-usage, depend upon it, could stir him up to such blasphemous words, as too many of our time allow themselves in, when heated by harvest or any other hard work. It is a sad thing, indeed, that Christians cannot labour together, gathering the fruits of the earth in a quiet honest way, without the air being polluted by horrid oaths, and curses, and other foul and profane talk. Have we not reason to fear, that some great part of the blessing of this and of other harvests may have been forfeited by this sin of swearing in particular, so common as it unhappily is in our fields and along our roads? For surely it must be in a remarkable degree affronting to the GIVER of all goodness, to be thus continually insulting His Name in the very act of receiving His bounty, and when the very dullest must feel, that if He do but hide His face for a moment, if He let loose His storms but for a very short time, all our hopes are gone, and we have famine instead of plenty.

Again, there is in some parts of harvest work, at least in glean-
ing, which goes along with it, a good deal of liberty which is often dangerous. Persons are assembled with no one to keep them in order: there is danger of rudeness, wantonness, intemperance; of intemperance especially, when they come home heated and wearied. Yet surely it is no great thing to ask, that Christian labourers should be like those reapers of Boaz, and not behave one way in sight and another out of sight. Surely Christian young men need not be ashamed to be kind and courteous, and respectful to those who cannot protect themselves, when they read how those workmen in the field of Bethlehem behaved to the young stranger Ruth, coming suddenly among them. Neither should Christian masters think much to follow this patriarch in his considerate care, and look a little, as they best may, after the behaviour of those whom they employ or permit upon their grounds. If they care for God's blessing upon their crop, this

surely is a likelier way to win it, than if they left every one, in a proud carelessness, to take his own course.

As to dishonesty, hard or unfair bargains, liberties taken with men's property, or with the time which in fact is theirs, since they are to pay for it: we all feel at once how strange and false a thing it must be, to ask God's blessing and protection on any such ways; and then, what sort of a course is that on which we are afraid to ask God's blessing? Better lie in bed palsied or full of sores, than work ever so industriously and successfully, if such deadly sin go along with our work.

Lastly, let us beware of discontent and unthankfulness. Our times are, no doubt, very trying in that respect; all times, I suppose, are so: but the more men are tempted, the more reason that the ministers of CHRIST should remind them continually, that all is His will and His doing, and HE knows best. What if we were to make this harvest, which is just coming on, a school for ourselves in that excellent art of true resignation to God's most holy will? It will have its untoward accidents, no doubt; our hopes will be often disappointed or deferred by mistakes, unseasonable weather, or the like. Who knows indeed, whether for our many sins it may not prove a failing harvest, failing in comparison with our hopes, in the country generally? We have not, unhappily, so lived, as that such a mark of God's anger should be past belief. But let this or any thing else happen, our duty is to make up our minds beforehand that what God wills must be right; to see His countenance through the cloud, His hand guiding the storm; and so not only to refrain from hard *sayings* of discontent at the weather, such as all are shocked at, who are not entirely irreligious, but even to submit our innermost souls in peace and contentment to His will, however severe. None of us can doubt that it is happier far, if such be His will, to bear the greatest losses with a submissive mind, than to make the greatest gain with a spirit lifted up, and withdrawn from holy things.

Finally, committing ourselves and our works to HIM in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator, let us each one for himself resolve, by His grace, to do our part, that our families may be holy families, our village a holy village, our harvests gathered in, like this of righteous Boaz, in devout acknowledgment of God's presence,

in considerate care for the orphan, the fatherless, and the widow, and in watchful anxiety to avoid sin and scandal among all committed to our charge; that as Boaz and Ruth became the ancestors of David, and of the SON of GOD HIMSELF, and so were made use of to carry on His awful purposes, so we may in our day, each of us, do some little towards the coming of His kingdom. So, to conclude with what sounds like a harvest hymn of the Psalmist, May “our garners be full and plenteous with all manner of store; no decay, no leading into captivity, and no complaining in our streets:” and may we be “a happy people, having the LORD for our GOD!” Or if our sins have lost us that blessing, may we at least be a penitent people, having hope to be forgiven through CHRIST JESUS!

SERMON CXCI.

ST. PAUL'S JOY IN PRISON.

PHILIP. iv. 11.

“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

WHAT was the condition of the Saint who wrote these words? He was in prison, in danger of his life: he had nothing to live upon, but the charitable offerings of his Christian brethren in different places: for the time he was hindered from any open and visible way of doing good in his calling: and if he were released, he had nothing to look to, but a continuation of the sadness, poverty, and danger.

St. Paul was in prison when he wrote to the Philippians: for he speaks of his bonds in CHRIST several times in the first chapter. He was in danger of his life: for he says, CHRIST, he was sure, would be “magnified in his body;” that is, his sufferings would bring glory to CHRIST, whether it were in his life or in his death: he was “in a strait,” whether to wish to die or to live: he did not know how soon he might be offered, how soon his blood might be poured out, “upon the sacrifice and service of the faith of his brethren.”

He was in prison then, and in danger: and what had he to live on during his imprisonment? Nothing, as it appears, but either what he got by the labour of his hands, or what was sent him as a charitable offering by such Christians as those of Philippi, to whom he wrote from his prison, that he “abounded,

having received from them their most acceptable offerings," which he calls "a sacrifice well pleasing to GOD."

Of course, too, while he was thus imprisoned, he must have seemed, to himself and others, in a great measure cut off from doing any good in his high calling: he could not go wherever the SPIRIT might guide him, "teaching and exhorting publicly, and from house to house:" he could not be "instant in season and out of season." And even if he should be released, as he hoped to be, yet he had no other prospect than poverty and danger before him. He would still have to work for his bread, or to be fed by the alms of the people; he would still have to come to the prison and the grave again.

Such was the outward condition of the great Apostle; to say nothing now of his thousand inward cares and perplexities, enough surely to break the heart of most men, and such as we might think would almost excuse any person for being a little discontented and uneasy at his own lot. But how does St. Paul take it? He is not only content, but joyful. His letter, from beginning to end, is written in the most cheerful spirit. "I thank my GOD," says he, "upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy." "Whether in pretence or in truth, CHRIST is preached, and I therein do rejoice; yea, and will rejoice; for I know that this shall turn to my salvation." "Fulfil ye my joy, that I may rejoice in the day of CHRIST." "If I be offered up, I joy and rejoice with you: for the same cause do ye joy and rejoice with me." "Rejoice in the LORD alway, and again I say, Rejoice." "I rejoiced in the LORD greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again." Joy and rejoicing, peace and contented love, are the very notes, as it were, which make up his hymn, the thoughts which break out of his heart on every occasion, whilst he is writing this affectionate letter to his "brethren dearly beloved and longed for," his "joy and crown." Poor as he was, and reproached, and in prison, and in danger of death, and looking to no better condition as long as he should live in the world; forlorn too, with no wife, no child, no brother, nor sister, no very near relation or natural friend to support him; yet his heart is overflowing with gladness: it breaks out on every side, like the

odour of the blessed Mary Magdalen's ointment, which filled all the house.

It is not that he feels it his duty to be calm and thankful, that he commands himself and forces himself to be so ; that he checks and puts down, with more or less pain, the struggling feelings of discontent and vexation within him : this might be a true account of what passed in the mind of many Christians, even of some Saints, at times ; but it is not the account of what was passing in St. Paul's mind, at least not when he was writing this letter to the Philippians : the joy and thanksgiving of his heart was then like a well of bright water, springing up within him of itself, without his seeking, without any effort of his. His joy then swelled highest, when outwardly there seemed most reason for fear and sorrow.

What is the account of this ? how can it be explained ? He tells us himself in one word : " I can do all things through CHRIST which strengtheneth me." Or, according to the word which a Prophet had before put into the mouth of God's people in their distress : " When I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light unto me." " The LORD is my strength and my song, and is become my salvation."

The presence of CHRIST was that good thing in St. Paul's lot, which turned every thing round it into brightness : as in pictures which many of us have seen of our LORD's nativity, a light is represented beaming from the cradle of the Divine Child, and filling every corner of the house, turning the poor stable and the rude manger into something more glorious, even to the eye, than the richest and brightest halls and pillars in a king's palace. Because of CHRIST's presence it seemed to him that he had all, and abounded, though he had but enough to go on from day to day, and depended for it on the alms of Christians very far off. Because CHRIST was with him and in him, he was not cast down by the most untoward things which were every day happening to him. He was in bonds ; the Jews of Rome, his brethren after the flesh, were obstinate against him ; his name was everywhere spoken of maliciously, in envy and strife. But CHRIST was with him, and gave him to see that all this turned out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel. He was daily on the edge of death,

but that was a joy to him, for he desired "to depart and to be with CHRIST;" nevertheless he was content to live in the flesh, seeing that it so pleased God, because it was more needful for his brethren, for their "furtherance and joy of faith."

What was it that made life and death, so great a matter, a thing so indifferent to St. Paul? Because, whether he lived or died, he knew he should be with CHRIST. CHRIST in him, the hope of glory, CHRIST dwelling in his heart by faith, CHRIST standing by him to strengthen him:—this was what made him content and joyful to abide in the flesh in the midst of all those sufferings, instead of at once departing to be for ever with CHRIST glorified.

Now, how was St. Paul so assured of the presence and blessing of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, His actual presence within him, changing him from glory to glory, and all that befel him into a blessing?

St. Paul knew this, in the first place, by his being made partaker of CHRIST's sacraments. CHRIST's prophet had said to him in CHRIST's Name, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins," and he had accepted the invitation: therefore he knew that his sins were washed away; he knew that he had put on CHRIST, that he was "washed, sanctified, justified, in the Name of the LORD JESUS, and by the SPIRIT of our God." Again, he knew—it is his own way of reasoning with the Corinthians—that he continued a member of that one Body, by his partaking of the One Bread, which is given to all the faithful alike in the Holy Communion.

But then, because it is possible for persons to receive the grace of God's Sacraments in vain; to throw away the great blessings of Baptism and of the Holy Eucharist, by going back to their old sins; therefore St. Paul was ever watchful to add to these outward signs the inward and only certain marks of CHRIST's presence. He exercised himself to keep always "a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man." He "lived in all good conscience towards God." He "kept under his body, and brought it into subjection, lest that by any means, when he had preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away." He "knew nothing of himself;" no wilful habitual sin; but he dared not *therefore* say he was righteous; his own doings he knew could

never justify him : *that* must be the work of CHRIST's awful presence within him. Yet this comfort he had in them, that they were a token of CHRIST's presence.

It is his own account of the matter. "Our rejoicing is this ; the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." And again, "As we have received mercy, we faint not ; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." These are a few out of many places, which show how St. Paul was enabled to turn his affliction into joy ; to feel as if he had all and abounded, when he was in prison, living on charity, and in daily peril of death with torments. He knew that CHRIST was with him by His Sacraments, and he had the sober testimony of his own conscience, that he had not forfeited the grace of those Sacraments : he had not driven CHRIST away from him.

This account of St. Paul's content and joyfulness is also too true and plain an account, why the world, as we see it around us, has so little of content and joyfulness in it at present. Is it not so ? Look where you will, are not the generality of people in care and trouble ?

I do not now speak of that care and trouble, which arises from doubt and fear about holy things ; from anxiety lest they should not have found CHRIST, or fear lest they should have forfeited His blessed presence. No doubt, there is a good deal of such distress as that among Christians in all times, especially in these : but for that kind of fear and trouble, the sense of our sins and the fear of losing CHRIST's presence, there is this great and sure consolation : that let it be as bitter as it may, it is in the way towards healing ; for that is the very case concerning which our LORD has said, "Come unto ME, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

It is not of this fear that I am now speaking, but of that which is unhappily far more common : discontent, and care, and fretfulness about our condition in this life. Every one of course is tempted to this, for no one's condition, I suppose, is exactly what

he could wish : every one is tempted to be discontented and fretful, but no one surely is forced to give way to the temptation, any more than to any other bad inclination. No Christian can truly say, I cannot help grumbling and repining, any more than he can say, I cannot help saying bad words, or, I cannot help lusting after evil things. Fretting care, and fear, and vexation of heart, and grudging against others, cannot be the necessary condition of any of CHRIST's people. There must be a remedy for it in the Gospel, as for every other sin and misery, had we but the heart to use it.

And yet, how is it with us, I fear I must say with almost all of us, in this respect ? Think of St. Paul in his imprisonment, living from day to day on the alms of his brethren : or of the same St. Paul out of prison, refusing alms, and maintaining himself as he might, by his trade. So far, St. Paul was in the condition of by far the greater number of the inhabitants of this or any other place, who are either supported by others, or are getting their own bread, but seldom perhaps in either case so abundantly as we might wish. St. Paul was outwardly in the same condition as most of the labourers and tradesmen in this or in any other English village : but he says, " I have all and abound : I am exceeding joyful in all my tribulations : I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content : " and we, alas ! wherever we go, speak and hear very different sounds from these. I say *we*, because it is too true, that discontent and fretfulness belong to those who have enough and to spare, quite as commonly as it does to the poor and needy ; and the devil craftily manages to make some men quite as miserable through an unchristian fear of want, as others are made by an unchristian way of bearing it.

All of us then, my brethren, are in danger (who shall deny it ?) of indulging such thoughts, and feelings, and questionings as these : " How hard the times are ! how unkind every one is ! how little am I looked on in comparison of others ! how unreasonable it is of this employer or that master, to expect so much of me, or allow me so little ! Such an one may be contented, for he has not this or that burthen which I have : or he has this or that help which I have not : but as for me, all things are against me, and how can I be easy in my mind ? "

Is it not too true, that a great number of us, in various condi-

tions of life, have so long gone on indulging themselves in thoughts and words like these, that they are become quite habitual to them, worn as one may say into the very grain and staple of their lives? Night and day they abound in such thoughts: they lie down to rest with them, and with them they awake in the morning: till at last, instead of rejoicing, like St. Paul in his prison and want, they show rather in the sight of God and His Angels, who are all the while watching them, such a dismal picture as the Prophet describes, speaking of the last days of a corrupt Church and People: "Men shall pass through the land, hardly bestead and hungry; and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and shall look upward. And they shall look unto the earth, and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness."

Now why is it that we are so miserable, or at best so unquiet, whereas St. Paul in the same or a much more forlorn condition was so full of content and joy and hope? Surely because we want what he had: the inward witness of our conscience, assuring us that we have in such measure kept our baptismal vow, as not to have forfeited the presence of JESUS CHRIST. Surely, if we would be content and happy, we must recover this inward witness, for by God's exceeding mercy it may be recovered, so far as that our consciences may assure us of our endeavouring at least to be truly and continually penitent. We, as St. Paul, may from this time forth exercise ourselves in keeping a good conscience toward God and toward man. As we get on in that good work, we shall learn with St. Paul to be content. I do not say that we shall of course be joyful: the memory of past sins may for a long time more or less hinder our feeling bright and lively in our spirits: but this, by God's blessing, we may depend on, that as the work of true repentance goes on, the gracious SAVIOUR of our souls will be more and more effectually present in our hearts: a sweet and calm hope will revive within us, though we may never in this world feel a joyful confidence such as St. Paul's: and our path, though often clouded by sad remembrances, will on the whole grow brighter and brighter.

When we are entered on such a course as this, our present discomfords will very soon cease to make us discontented. What-

ever they may be, we shall learn to take them thankfully, as God's appointed way of chastening us here, that HE may spare us hereafter.

What can a poor person do better, than offer up his wants and cares and sorrows as a kind of sacrifice to ALMIGHTY GOD, to be united to that grief which our LORD bore for him on the Cross? If he bear them thankfully for CHRIST's sake, they make him ore like CHRIST, they bring him nearer to CHRIST; and so, though sharp in themselves, they will be sweet to him: for that which brings CHRIST nearer, how can it be other than a joy, to one who at all truly loves CHRIST?

S E R M O N CXCII.

RESIGNATION THE SCHOOL OF PIETY¹.

PHILIP. iv. 11.

“ I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

SOME who are here may perhaps remember, that at the beginning of the harvest which is just over, I called on you to consider the history of Boaz and Ruth, and showed you how you might learn to obtain God's blessing on the works of your hands, and on the fruits of your fields. Since then the weeks of the harvest have passed away ; and no one, I suppose, will deny, that having been a most anxious time at the beginning, God has brought us through it far better than we could have expected.

If any one, farmer, labourer, or other person, be now inclined to complain and find fault, and talk and think with bitterness of the times going so much against him, I would wish him just to imagine to himself how much he would have given, what price we would all of us have paid, could we have been made certain, at the beginning of the harvest-weeks, that the progress and end of them would be such as it was : that the weather would change, and become glorious and bright, just such as harvest work requires, for the whole time of gathering in, and that not in this or that place only, but the whole country over : that the damage done to the crops in some way should be amply made up by their prosperity in other ways, and that at a time when for many

¹ Preached in 1843.

reasons any failure in the harvest would have been of even worse consequence than usual. Who could have reckoned upon all this ? and yet all this has been done for us, by the gracious bounty of HIM who always gives more than either we desire or deserve. Let us at least be thankful for the blessing now it has been given ; there has been among us too much of unquiet murmuring and dissatisfaction, in the bare looking on to the evil time ; let us not now add to the sin, and make it more inexcusable, by repining at God's way of dealing out His bounty to us ; that this man, as we choose to think, has too much, and another too little.

- Indeed, to murmur and complain, openly and directly, against the weather or the crops which God sends, is so very gross impiety, that it is not often, I trust, found among us : and when any person, giving way to unbelief, is heard to utter a thought of that sort, people are of course shocked at it ; it would be well then, if we had the same kind of feeling in regard of all discontent with any of God's gracious dealings. For in truth, to be content, and make up your mind that all things but sin are somehow ordered for the best, is as reasonable and right in our thoughts of other matters, as of the weather and the crops which God sends.

Suppose you are a hired labourer or servant, you get your bread by working for another : you would be shocked, and with good reason, should you hear your master speak in a blasphemous and bitter way of the times and the seasons which God sends : but what if you permit yourself to use the same kind of language concerning your master, and others who are set over you, or with whom you are to work ? is not this also inexcusable in the hearing of God and His holy Angels ? For they see plainly, that as the weather and the seasons are of God's own sending, so is the master whom we serve, so are the companions who work with us, so are all the circumstances, little and great, of our station ; even that which is most amiss in them, that which is really perverse and sinful, HE allows for wise and good purposes : and to rebel against it, or to complain of it in a bitter, discontented way, is the same kind of impiety, though it may not startle us so much, as rebelling against God, or complaining of the weather.

Some persons are so unhappily minded, that whatever is done to them, whatever condition they are placed in, they are always

imagining how things might have been better, how they might have been more kindly treated, how this or that inconvenience might have been avoided, this or that comfort provided for; and they lose all, or more than half, of the enjoyment of what God has really provided for them, in fancying how much more they might have had, which others, as it seems to them, have. And as to the Great GIVER of all, they become, without knowing it, really quite unthankful to HIM.

I believe one great temptation to many, to get into this evil way, is their very high opinion of themselves, their own judgment and foresight, their own skill and management. They are pleased with themselves, and account it a mark of wisdom to be quick in finding all the fault they can; and the Evil One, who is always on the watch to make them like himself, is ready enough to help them to such thoughts as these, "How much better I could do this or that! how provoking it is that I am not allowed to order it! how hard that others should get so much praise and reward, which I deserve far more than they! how intolerable that people will not see how easily they might get rid of this or that uncomfortable circumstance, and make my life more agreeable, or my profit greater than it is!"

These are the thoughts which night and day take up the minds of a great number of Christian persons, redeemed and regenerated souls, for whom Heaven had been prepared: these are the husks with which their hard master feeds them, instead of the sweet refreshment of Christian content and thankfulness. They lose the benefit of their honesty and sobriety, their truth and industry, and many other virtues, because they will not have so much faith, as to trust God really and heartily with themselves in this present world.

When discontent is searched out to the bottom, it is in fact no better than unbelief. It is the root then of all evil, for it is setting yourself against the will of God, just as being resigned and contented is having the same will as HE has.

And besides this, there is the greatest danger of a person's being led, by a murmuring temper, into other great and deadly sin, such as now perhaps he least dreams of. Who was the first murmurer we read of? It was our mother Eve; she murmured and thought it hard to be kept from that one tree, hanging as its

fruit did always within her reach; and the consequence we all know.

Who was the next, to show himself quick in perceiving what was disagreeable in his own lot, and jealous of others preferred before him? It was Eve's eldest son, Cain; in this respect too much made after her likeness. He saw that Abel was more favoured than he: he murmured at it; and before long he was the murderer of his brother.

Consider again the children of Israel in the wilderness; it would really seem as if their sad fall was entirely owing, in the first instance, to discontent. They were continually murmuring against the way in which Moses and Aaron ordered things. "Ye have brought this whole assembly into the wilderness, to kill us with hunger. Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou brought us out to die in the wilderness? to kill us, and our children, and our cattle, with thirst?" This was their way of speaking all along: it is the tone of proud discontented persons, quite sure that they knew well enough what ought to have been done, and angry that they had not their own way; and what did it come to? They really forgot, or disbelieved, after a while, that there was a God with them to be their Guide, that all these were trials permitted by HIM; and they set up other gods to go before them; they made them a captain to return to Egypt; they joined themselves to Baalpeor, in the worst and most impure idolatry.

So it is with all of us, one way or another, when we permit ourselves to "murmur in our tents," instead of "hearkening to the voice of the Lord." Dissatisfied with the measure of present comfort which ALMIGHTY GOD affords us, we look here and there for something to take up our minds, something on which we may rest, and be rid of the fretting anxious longing for more. HE offers us the kingdom of heaven, offers us HIMSELF, and the pleasures which are at His right hand, for evermore. If we close with that gracious offer, well; then our discontent and repining will be changed, by His grace, into a disregard of worldly things, and an earnest longing for true happiness: but if we will not accept God, behold, God's enemy and ours is but too ready with his tempting offers of something to suit our fancies, and make us forget for the time ourselves and our restlessness.

Thus men who at the beginning dreamed of no such evil consequences, but merely followed their passions, because they were weary and discontented, have become drunkards, robbers, adulterers : no sin so horrible, but they may be so led into it. The progress in sin of the unfaithful Israelites, is what too many may understand by their own miserable experience. First they murmured, then lusted after evil things, then committed fornication, then became idolaters, and fell away entirely from God.

O beware then, my brethren, of the first whisper of a discontented repining spirit ! However natural it may seem to you, however slight and ordinary the occasion on which it is exercised, the Evil One, depend on it, is at hand, to make his advantage of it to our ruin : and the good SPIRIT of God too, HE, we are yet more sure, is at hand, to turn even this to good, if we will work with HIM.

For let it be ever so little a matter which annoys us, if we get over it because we are determined to be contented and cheerful, knowing such to be the will of God in CHRIST JESUS concerning us, this is the work of the gracious COMFORTER, this is that good thing which the Scripture calls Joy, and mentions, along with Love and Peace, among the fruits of the SPIRIT.

It greatly furthers true prayer, as any man may find, who after forcing himself in earnest, for conscience sake, to bear with disagreeable behaviour, or rude words, or untoward events, or irksome duties, kneels down to ask for God's blessing : there will be silent comfortable whispers of hope, so to call them, in the air around him, such as the wilfully restless and repining must never expect to find accompanying their prayers.

Such habits of self-denial in ordinary company and every-day work are a great help in that self-denial which is more properly called religious and devotional. If you are used to keep yourself from repining and gloom, when untoward things happen, you will the more easily command your appetite on your fasting-day, or resist any other pleasure which you know you ought not to indulge in.

For, strange to say, the disposition to be discontented, all painful as one would think it must be, takes hold of people in a way very like the love they have for any other evil thing. It haunts them, returns upon them, accompanies them every where :

they must watch, and deal warily with themselves, and try all ways to get the better of it. If you read the history of Saul, for example, the first king of Israel, you will see how the spirit of repining and jealousy, once indulged, gets hold of a man, and makes his whole life and heart, by degrees, miserable and wicked, a burthen to himself, and a calamity to all who come near him.

The greatest safeguard against it is the spirit of humility. If you truly think yourself of little worth, you will be truly satisfied with what God and man allow you, though it be but little. You will be, as the Psalmist teaches, like a weaned child, into whom no thought of pride has ever yet entered, and who is therefore soon taught content and patience, when debarred from that which had seemed most necessary to him.

The least regard from ALMIGHTY GOD, the least favourable turn of His Providence, is to such a simple humble person a wonder of mercy, because he accounts and knows himself to be unworthy of any favour at all. Other persons, probably of less saintly and less holy turn of mind, are astonished when they hear these contented ones so very thankful for what they deem such ordinary matters: they think it either a sort of affectation or childishness; but it is in fact an outpouring, in its degree, of the same SPIRIT which wrought in the blessed Elisabeth, mother of St. John Baptist, and caused her to cry out, upon the visit of her cousin, the Virgin Mary, "Whence is this to me, that the mother of my LORD should come unto me?"

Why should not we, my brethren, every one of us, try to enter into her mind; to take every thing pleasant, however trifling, as a token from HIM who then came invisibly with His mother to Elisabeth: and to make unpleasant things also tokens of HIM, since they are opportunities given of enduring, though it be but a little, for His sake? What greater mercy or grace could have been shown to us, sinners as we are, by the FATHER of all mercies, than so to give us a chance of finding HIM in every thing? What greater misery and folly than ours, if we persist in fixing our foolish hearts on the mere present outward vexation or comfort, instead of looking on to the spiritual, eternal use of it?

Think of the blessed Saints, my brethren, and be ashamed to

murmur at your burthens, so light in comparison : think of the joy set before you, and how miserable it would be to lose that, by having all your own way now. Think of the CROSS—think of it in earnest ; do not only *say* over its name, and that of the BLESSED ONE hanging on it, but think of it and of HIM deeply in your hearts ; then surely, whatever your state, you will learn “there-with to be content.”

SERMON CXCIH.

GOD'S THRESHING, AND THE CORN OF HIS FLOOR¹.

MATTHEW xiii. 39.

“ The harvest is the end of the world.”

THE labours of one more harvest are now, I believe, fairly completed; the plough and the harrow, the scythe and the sickle, have done their work for this season: the barns and the yards are stored, and the husbandman's anxieties are so far over. And surely we have great reason to be thankful to GOD ALMIGHTY for the comparative plenty of this season: especially when we look back on the last sowing time, and recollect how many weeks and months we had of what seemed most unseasonable weather, so that in very many places the principal crops could not be got into the ground until very long after the proper time, and there seemed reason to fear a great falling off in the provision of thousands for the next winter. From these fears we have been relieved: not surely for any merit of ours, but entirely through the mercy of HIM who maketh His Sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and unjust. And it is to be hoped that we have all before now offered up thanksgivings again and again for so great, so undeserved, an instance of His fatherly care. Many of us for some weeks past have had in our mouths such words as these: “ What a blessed time we have had!

¹ Preached after harvest in 1842.

how gracious God has been to the land! how grateful we ought to be!" Surely it were a great pity to let all this spend itself in mere good feelings and good words. We should be ashamed to do so, if we had to deal with an earthly benefactor, whose bread we were daily eating. Did we know of any particular object on which he had set his heart, and which we had it in our power to forward, we should account it too bad in ourselves to neglect that object, or be but cold in pursuing it.

Now the great object with the LORD of the harvest, in the ordering of this lower world, is, as we know, the establishment and furtherance of the Kingdom of Heaven: and HE constantly sets before us the harvest, with its various cares and works, as what may teach us a great deal of that Kingdom. It may then, by His blessing, be a good way of showing our thankfulness, if we try to consider and fix in our minds what inward and spiritual lessons HE meant us to learn, by the outward appearances and various experience of this and of every year's harvest. It is in fact a great and awful parable, repeated to our very eyes as regularly as the year comes round. Let us attend to it with something of the same earnest awfulness of mind, as if we were actually by, and heard our LORD explain it, as HE sometimes did in His parables, to the multitude gathered round HIM.

"The harvest," HE tells us, "is the end of the world." It is the regular Scriptural image of the great Day of Judgment. Thus in the prophet Joel: "Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about;—let the heathen be wakened, and come up. . . for then will I sit to judge all the heathen round about: Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe." And again, St. John in the Revelation "looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like the SON OF MAN, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another Angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to HIM that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Thy sickle, and reap, for the time is come for Thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And HE that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped."

The ALMIGHTY then plainly intends, that thoughtful persons, having His instructions in their hearts, should be reminded, when they see a harvest field, of that which we shall all see at the end

of the world. Our first thoughts naturally are of the beauty and richness of the sight, and of the great relief and comfort which comes of it to men's bodies, and to the estate of the world. But he that will take a hint from our LORD's own instructions, will look further on, to things out of bodily sight. He will see in each stalk of corn the token of his own changed body, to rise one day out of the grave, the same with this which now is, yet as unlike it as the plant of wheat is unlike the dry grain which was sown. He will see in the reapers, the Angels or Messengers of CHRIST, sent forth in these last days to gather together His elect from the one end of the earth to the other. The sickle will represent to him God's fearful judgments on this world and on the sinners in it, whereby this final gathering is to be accomplished.

Let us use ourselves to such thoughts as these. If we have hitherto been accustomed to regard the harvest as a matter merely of this world: if we have gone through this present season, not (it may be hoped) unthankful to HIM who openeth His hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness, but without any special thought of the great Day of Judgment, as being that which such seasons were meant to remind us of: I beseech you, let us resolve to do so no more. Let us not think only of prices and crops, of skill and labour, and wages, and of the meat which perisheth; but let us use ourselves, when we see this principal work of the year going on, to imagine, and see with our mind's eye, the great work of God's everlasting year—the gathering in for eternity of the whole world.

To enter a little more into particulars:—The corn, standing in its place, is like the children of the Church, either as yet in this first life, or newly raised out of their graves, awaiting the sickle: that is, awaiting the commands of the LORD of the harvest, the SON OF MAN on His Throne, who shall send forth His reapers,¹ His Angels and Saints, to gather out of His Kingdom all offences and all evildoers, to be burned like tares in the fire, and to gather the wheat, His fruitful ones, into His barn.

“The harvest is the end of the world,” the time appointed by the MASTER. Other persons, perhaps, going along the field, may have been wondering, from time to time, when it would be reaped, thinking how ripe it was, some perhaps blaming the owner

for waiting so long : but in the mean time he is the only judge ; when he sees fit, and not sooner, the work shall begin. Just so it is with the great day ; some perhaps will have been complaining, and crying out with the Saints under the Altar, " How long, O LORD, dost Thou not judge and avenge our cause ? " but it all rests with HIM : when HE sees fit, and no sooner, the sickle will be put forth, and the harvest of the earth reaped ; and that suddenly, and so as to take the greater number unprepared.

Again : even in the cleanest and best cultivated land, up to the very time of gathering the crop, we see a mixture of weeds and corn ; and our LORD in the parable of the tares, from which the text is taken, expressly warns us that this will be the case in His Kingdom, even unto the great day. The tares which the enemy hath sown are to grow together with the wheat until the harvest. Scandalous persons and evil-doers will be not entirely rooted out of the Church, until that day come. GOD ALMIGHTY bears with them so far, and so must we for a time.

Again, it is a natural thought, when the harvest comes, that now is the real time of trying and judging of all the different plans and modes of cultivation, which have been adopted in different grounds throughout the year. Now, and not until now, are the kindliness of the soil and the skill of the husbandman put to their final and certain proof. Our works, all the year through, have had reference to this moment : if they are found to answer now, it is well : if not, however fair and promising appearances may have been for a time, the whole is a failure. The corn may have sprung up early, the field may have looked green and beautiful and refreshing, the ears may have seemed healthful, and have waved pleasantly in the wind : but this is not what the husbandman looks for : he is intent on the end : he looks to see if the ripe sheaves yield abundantly : that is what answers his purpose, that and nothing else.

Do you not at once see, how true all this is in a spiritual sense ? If we are wise, we too shall look forward, all the year through, to the time of harvest. Nothing will satisfy us, short of that which will do us good at the last day. The greenness and beauty of early beginnings in goodness, the fair and rich promise of later years, and what seem good works, will be a hope and comfort to us, but we shall not depend upon them. We shall still look for-

ward, with awfulness and fear, to the end, and shall try to order all our doings in such a way as may profit us then : remembering that " God seeth not as man seeth." Fair words and good intentions now, are like the greenness of corn in spring : they will but make the disappointment bitterer, if the harvest come and find us without good fruit.

It is often found that the corn yields very differently from what had been expected : this present year, I believe, is an instance : the ears that seemed short, and from which little was expected, are found well stored with wholesome and nourishing grain. Here is a hint to stay our unruly tongues, so apt to pass sentence upon this or that one among our neighbours. If we cannot judge beforehand of the corn which we see growing close to us, how much less of the hearts and lives of our brethren, which we do not see ! " Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come : " then, and not till then, " shall every man's work be made manifest."

This does not of course hinder, but that Christians must see, and mournfully condemn, gross and notorious sin and irreligion, such works as those, of which we plainly read, that they who do them shall not inherit God's kingdom ; just as the husbandman, though he cannot exactly foresee how this or that sample will yield, knows when he sees an ear of corn thoroughly diseased with blight or mildew. He is sure *that* can bear nothing, whether other ears bear more or less.

Another thought, which Holy Scripture suggests to Christians watching harvest work, is this : here we see the end and the result of a long course of providences on the part of ALMIGHTY God, carried on in secret, in a manner unknown to us, but all tending one way, and now at last bearing their fruit. Such is the course of this world altogether, and of the Church or Kingdom of God in it. Our Lord has taught us so most expressly. " So is the Kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth of itself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." As surely as the sunshine and showers, the qualities of the air and

soil, are acting on the seeds and plants, and preparing them for the harvest in a way secret to us; so is the ALMIGHTY, by His dealings with the world and the Church, preparing for the final accomplishment of His great work.

And as we reasonably count it wicked and profane, to speak against HIM on account of the weather which HE sends, so let us make up our minds to acquiesce in His dealings, to hold our peace at His presence, in regard of all the other concerns of this world, whether public or private, whether a whole nation be concerned in them, or only some one family; whether they affect ourselves or our friends. We may be sure that all tends in some unknown way to the accomplishment of His great and holy will: there is but one thing that we need be very anxious about, and that, by His grace, depends entirely on ourselves: namely, where we shall be ourselves found in that great day of ingathering. Look you well to this first, and all other things, doubt it not, shall be added unto you.

Neither are we to be cast down, if our trial cost us a good deal of pain and self-denial. If we win the prize at last, all this will seem little to us, or rather, it will increase our joy: as the husbandman has a peculiar delight in harvest time, recollecting what difficulties he has overcome, and by how much thoughtful contrivance and laborious self-denial he has caused the stubborn ground to become, under God's blessing, fruitful and kindly.

Of this also, the Scripture takes notice. "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy. He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him."

But the most overpowering and awful of all the thoughts which the harvest suggests to a believing mind, is that of the threshing, or separation, which it leads to. As in common harvest, so in this great harvest of all, there will be tares to be parted from among the wheat, chaff to be winnowed away from the grain. Thus the office of the JUDGE was described by His Forerunner: "His fan is in His hand, and HE will thoroughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner, but will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."—"HE will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into My barn."

Then will be "discerning between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth HIM not," when "the day cometh which shall burn as an oven, and the proud, yea and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Or as it is in the well-known Psalm: "The ungodly shall be like the chaff, which the wind scattereth away from the face of the earth. The ungodly shall not be able to stand in the judgment, neither the sinners in the congregation of the righteous." These, and many more places of Scripture, represent to us the unsparing separation which the power of God will make after the harvest of the earth has been reaped; a thing which we can hardly now conceive, however true and certain we know it to be. Good and evil are seemingly so mixed up, in our own consciences, alas! as well as in the world around us, that it is even beyond our imagination, how the one should be so entirely separated from the other, as we know they will be after the day of judgment. But so neither can a child understand how the corn and weeds, which he sees growing together, can be thoroughly parted asunder; how the good grain can be parted from the chaff and husks, which he sees gathered in with it. Yet the crop is to be so treated; the child's ignorance makes no difference in that; neither, because we are unable to comprehend how, will the Great Husbandman be the less able to separate and distinguish the saved from the lost in that day.

And all that is lost, we read, shall be burned: there is no middle state between happiness and misery; only the furnace of fire for the tares and chaff, and the LORD's garner for the wheat.

Lose no time, I beseech you, in imagining, "How can these things be?" but consider your own case, that you must yourself be in the one company or the other; and that the ALMIGHTY, by a great miracle of His mercy, having given us our choice, we are inexcusable, and at once guilty of death, if we do not choose life with all our heart.

As the harvest is thus, on the one hand, a token of the punishment prepared for the wicked, so it may help us to think worthily of the joy prepared for CHRIST's obedient ones, a subject no less awful and mysterious in its way. The corn, we know, is not

housed and thrashed that it may remain in so many separate grains, but that many grains being duly prepared, and mixed into one loaf, it may so fulfil its purpose for the good of God's creatures. Even so God has not made us to be happy, each singly and apart from the rest: we must be incorporated into one Body, the Body of CHRIST; joined together, really and spiritually, as members of His Church and kingdom. This union HE HIMSELF represents to us under the figure of Bread; partly, I suppose, that we may understand how close and intimate it is; not like several limbs and joints compacted together, but like drops of water or small portions of air, mutually running one into another. "We, being many, are one Bread and one Body." We are one Bread, by our union with HIM who is the Life of our souls; one, because we all have one and the same spiritual Life, from one Head, JESUS CHRIST, and are meant to be joined together in nearer and closer participation of HIM for ever.

And of this the Holy Communion is a token and pledge, and the great mean, also, whereby God brings it to pass in this world. As the Apostle goes on and says, "We are one Bread and one Body: for we are all partakers of that one Bread." The virtue of that holy thing, which the faithful receive in the Sacrament of the LORD'S Supper, is such, that it kneads, as it were together, and forms into one loaf, one Body, one CHRIST, the whole number of Christian people, in all places, and at all times. And of this the Bread which the Priest duly offers on the LORD'S holy altar or table is an emblem; as the twelve loaves or shew-bread which used to be placed on the table in the outer Tabernacle, were an emblem of the twelve tribes of Israel duly offering themselves to the ALMIGHTY; not each person apart, but in that union which God intended them to partake of.

Thus, as the works of the harvest and the threshing-floor were meant to be to every one of us signs and remembrances of the great and dreadful day, so the Bread, the Fruit of the harvest, is the token and pledge of the blessed end of that day, to all who have not forfeited their portion in CHRIST; Union with HIM and His Saints in His everlasting kingdom.

Finally, when the harvest is over, the husbandman's natural thought must be, "Here is the chief work of this year done: it is over, and cannot be recalled: if I have managed my ground

ill, and so made it less fruitful than it should be, I can but take the consequences ; it is too late to think of amending it for this season. Such thoughts as these may help us to represent to ourselves the confusion and self-reproach of the slothful ones in that harvest, after which there will be no seed-time, no months of renewed labour, to make up for past negligence, no spring or summer to provide for another autumn. Such a state of mind the Prophet seems to have had in his thoughts, when in the name of God's suffering people, full of remorse, but not truly repenting, he cried out, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and yet we are not saved."

What if this should be our case? and it will be our case, if we live not always in fear of it. We shall be chaff and not wheat, the wind will carry us away, if we be not careful to maintain our communion with JESUS CHRIST, by all holy desires, good counsels, and Church ordinances ; and, above all, by strict keeping of the commandments ; and by long, deep, bitter repentance, when they have been broken : and all this, as the yet more perfect and only preparation for the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of CHRIST, which is itself the way to be one with HIM hereafter for ever.

S E R M O N CXCIV.

ECONOMY A HELP TO FAITH ¹.

MATTHEW vi. 33.

“ Seek ye first the Kingdom of GOD, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

It might be asked, what are the things of which our BLESSED LORD is speaking in these remarkable words? They are the things which HE has made most necessary for us here in this short life ; meat, drink, and clothing ; along with which of course we must understand all other like things ; I mean such as fuel, shelter, or lodging, attendance and remedies in sickness and weakness ; all things, in short, which may be properly called “ necessities of life.”

Our BLESSED MASTER knew well how much our infirm nature would be always taken up with the thought of these things, both for ourselves and for those whom HE has made near and dear to us ; and HE has most mercifully given us a rule, sufficient, if we would truly practise it, to cure us of both sorrow and sin in all such matters. HE has promised us the necessities of life on this one condition, that we make His Kingdom and righteousness our first care. HE has promised, who is Truth itself : in this, as in higher things, offering to us His peculiar gift, His peace,—the

¹ Preached to a Friendly Society, in Whitsun week.

peace of God, given not as the world giveth. The world promises us food and raiment, and freedom from care and anxiety about it, on condition of our being worldly wise, "rising up early and late taking rest, and eating the bread of carefulness:" but our LORD promises us the same, and His blessing besides, on this only condition, that we seek first His Kingdom and righteousness.

Now food and raiment, support and relief, at such times as men shall not be able to get them for themselves, are the very objects with a view to which all well constituted Friendly Societies are formed. You are, in profession at least, here assembled to beg God's blessing on your undertaking, and His grace, that it and all your other works may be begun, continued, and ended in HIM. No words then of Holy Scripture can be better suited to the present occasion, than the promise of our LORD in the text. We may at once apply them as a kind of rule, whereby to judge whether we are going on in a way pleasing in His sight. If we and our Societies are seeking before all, God's Kingdom and His righteousness, then may we humbly hope for His blessing on them; not so in any other case.

Now I think one may perceive in the notion itself of well-ordered Friendly or Provident Societies, certain helps towards seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, which may encourage us to hope that HE may look on them with grace and approbation.

There must be some little self-denial and forethought, for a labouring man to belong to such a society; more especially if times go hard with him, and he has many mouths to provide for. He must often do without things which he would be glad to possess, and save money which he would be glad to spend. Now self-denial and forethought are good things; they are, as far as they go, exercises of faith; and when any one of us tries to practise them, even but in small matters, from a sense of duty, we have good hope that God's blessing will rest upon that man. The HOLY SPIRIT will accept his little offering, if he spoil it not by wilful sin in other respects, and will give him grace to do higher and better things.

Then the turn of mind which leads people to join such societies is undoubtedly so far good and Christian, as it tends to industry,

prudence, sobriety, and order, rather than to idleness and folly, riot and revelling. Young men, at first setting out in life, find themselves always in the condition of one to whom two ways offer themselves at once: the broad way which leadeth unto destruction, and the narrow way which leadeth unto life; the way of pleasure, so called, and the way of duty; and it seems plain, upon the whole, that Benefit Societies, well managed, are an encouragement to those who are inclined to take the right path rather than the wrong. If they think at all, it keeps in their minds the recollection of sickness and accidents, to which they are so liable every moment, and of old age, to which they all hope to come. It helps them to know, if they have good and frugal resolutions, where they may find others to keep them in countenance. As far as it goes, it tends to remove them from among the wild and thoughtless part of mankind, and to settle them among the prudent, and regular, and considerate.

Then it is very particularly to be considered, that these Friendly Societies are in their intention not only prudent, but benevolent and charitable things. Every person who subscribes, knows that very likely he may never receive any of his own money back again. He may be taken off suddenly; and besides, for aught he knows, the rules of the Society may not be so well framed, but that it may fail, and be unable to help him, just at the time when he needs it. If notwithstanding this uncertainty he subscribes with a cheerful heart, saying, "If I never need it, so much the better; I will not grudge it to those who do;" this again seems to be a sort of temper which God, it may be hoped, will bless and encourage: it partakes of faith and trust in Him, and of a kindly, open heart towards our neighbour.

You will of course understand, that when I speak of these as so many reasons for thinking well of Friendly Societies, I mean such societies as are well ordered and conducted: such as really, and not in words only, discourage rioting and drunkenness and revelry, profane, filthy, or discontented talk, or quarrelling and disputing, where all should be brotherly love. We know it is but too easy, in this or any other company of mortal men, for such bad ways and passions to get the better; and then, of course, all that has been said in their praise will not hinder them from doing more harm than good; and so much the more, as evil is

always made worse, when people follow a multitude to do it. Does it not indeed seem something outrageous, and inviting the bad Spirits to do us a mischief, when we contradict our own professions so entirely? if a Provident Society, for example, should prove a school of drunkenness and extravagance, or a Friendly Society a place of bitter complainings and strife? I suppose, that however little we may be accustomed to look on such professions in a serious light, we shall find at the last, that they cannot altogether pass for nothing; they will tell against us, as showing at least that we knew what our duty was: we shall give account of them at the day of judgment, as of all our idle and useless words.

However, such ill conduct, if it were to be found among us, would be no fault of our Society, which is set up, in profession at least, for the purpose of promoting the honour of ALMIGHTY GOD, and the good of one another. I say, it will be no fault of our Society, as long as we resolutely set our faces against all misconduct, and keep boldly to our own rules; considering it but a false good-nature, which allows people to act as they please, when they are in a way to do themselves serious harm both in soul and body.

Let us resolve to be thus seasonably strict, and then we may hope to find that the blessing of ALMIGHTY GOD rests on our undertaking, as in other respects, so in this, which I have kept for the last, and which I suppose to be, perhaps, the greatest benefit of a society of this kind; namely, that so far as it goes, it puts a person out of worldly care, and sets him at liberty to serve GOD with all his heart. If you belong to such an association as this, you are, or may be, so far, freed from pining care and anxiety, about what is to become of you in case of your falling ill, or living to be past your work. You are so far better able to fulfil our LORD's earnest exhortation, "Take no thought for the morrow." You have less excuse for permitting yourself to be interrupted, whilst you are at your prayers, with considerations how you shall be able to get your bread if you become unable to work. You have this encouragement to cast all your care upon HIM, that HE has already permitted you to take care of yourself in a matter of so great consequence, as the providing some support and relief, at least for your sickness and old age. So much the

worse and more ungrateful is it, if you allow yourself to be discontented, and repine, as if you were forsaken in the world.

We read in the Acts of the Apostles, how the first generation of Christians, those who saw the HOLY SPIRIT descend, as at this sacred time, on the heads of CHRIST's chosen messengers ;—how they entered into the mind of our SAVIOUR, and tried to fulfil His commandment of taking no thought.

They saw that the more people had, the more anxious they are, generally speaking, about their worldly goods and affairs ; and they remembered what counsel our Blessed SAVIOUR had given to one, who, having great wealth, had asked His advice about obtaining eternal life : “ If thou wilt be perfect, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, take up the Cross, and follow ME.” The first Christians understood this as advice given to those who would be perfect ; and it was their earnest desire to be perfect : they were smitten with a deep love for JESUS CHRIST and His Cross ; and therefore, when the opportunity was given, they joyfully took HIM at His word, and cast off all the burthen of earthly goods and earthly cares, in order to wait on HIM, and spread His Gospel in the world : “ As many as were possessed of lands and houses, sold them, and brought the price of the lands, and laid it at the Apostles' feet.” They put it into the hands of their Pastors, that is, into the hands of CHRIST, in order to make a common stock or treasury, out of which “ distribution was made unto all men, as many as had need.” They themselves, from that time, were to have their share out of the common stock : they had no longer any care about private property, to entangle and hinder and draw them back in the great work of spreading the Gospel, wheresoever CHRIST's Apostles should send them : they had sought first, before all else put together, “ the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” and now there could be no doubt that all necessary things would be given them over and above.

Thus did the first Christians of Jerusalem, and many after them in many ages and countries, follow our Blessed SAVIOUR's counsels of perfection. They sacrificed all that they had, to take up the Cross and follow HIM ; and for one part of their reward, they were freed from bitter anxious thoughts, as long as they lived in

this world, about "what they should eat, or what they should drink, or wherewithal they should be clothed." CHRIST provided for them out of the treasury of His Church, as HE provides for the birds of the air, without their troubling or caring about the matter : they had no need to sow nor reap, nor gather into barns.

Well is it in our days too, and in all days while the Church lasts in the world it will be well, for those who can find in their hearts to follow so glorious an example : but what if it be not in your reach nor in mine, nor such as to be followed exactly by ordinary Christians ? are we to judge that you and I and ordinary Christians have no concern in it at all ? that we cannot follow it in any sense, or in any degree whatever ? Not so, surely, my brethren. It is in your power, and in mine, and in the power of all Christians, to pray for and practise a holy trust in God, a holy indifference to the concerns of this life. It is, for example, in the power of all who belong to such societies as this, when they have diligently done their work, and kept themselves from dishonest debt, and made their regular payment into the stock of the society, to say to themselves, "Now I will not fret nor be careful about meat and drink, and such things : I have a provision to look to, scanty indeed, but, by God's mercy, it is sure to be enough, if I have but courage to take HIM at His word : " that word is, "Cast thy burthen upon the LORD, and HE will nourish thee."

Well then, we will, so may it please HIM, cast our burthen and care altogether upon HIM : we will seek His kingdom, and the righteousness thereof, first and foremost ; we will make it our chief concern. We will not let our work hinder us in our prayers : let us be never so hurried in the morning, never so weary in the evening, we will not go out to our task, nor lie down in our bed, without earnestly imploring a blessing from HIM in the Name of JESUS CHRIST. Of course, cares and temptations will come : the world cannot be without them : it will seem sometimes as if trouble was coming on, and the enemy will attack us, as did Job's wife of old : "Dost thou still retain thine integrity, thine entire patience and trust in thy SAVIOUR ? thou hadst better at once curse God and die ;" but when such thoughts come on us, we shall know from whom they come, and,

by the grace of a Mightier One, we will put them away at once. So also if he tempt us with the thought of bettering our condition by any dishonest way, then again we will remember our purpose, to seek God and His righteousness; and we will abhor the gain, be it little or much, which is to be got by cheating or pilfering, by deceit in buying or selling, or by neglect of work and duty.

It is God, and not man, my Christian brethren and friends, who promises you, from His throne in heaven, that "if you do these things, ye shall never fall:" your portion will be sure in that kingdom, which, if you are faithful Christians, you have well and wisely preferred to the whole world.

And as you go on longer and more steadily in this good way, endeavouring from day to day, and from week to week, to say your prayers more earnestly, and to give yourself up more entirely to the obedience of CHRIST, you will by degrees come to understand more and more of the high and heavenly blessings which the SAVIOUR of the world set before you, when HE bade you "seek the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof." That kingdom is the Church of God's Saints, begun here on earth, but to be made perfect and glorious in heaven. That righteousness is the righteousness of JESUS CHRIST our SAVIOUR, thrown like a bright robe over us, entering as a new life into us, when we are first made members of HIM; and that, as the Catechism tells us, is at Holy Baptism. Then we are first made partakers of the heavenly righteousness of God's kingdom, but it is renewed and brightened, and made more perfect, by the Holy Communion of His Body and Blood, and by His blessing on our humble obedience and penitence, and on the holy ordinances of His Church, as often as we worthily receive them, from our cradle to our grave.

You see, then, it is no small thing which JESUS CHRIST sets before you, when HE offers you the righteousness of His kingdom. It is indeed close communion with HIM; it is being one with HIM, as HE is with His FATHER.

Who, then, can be happier than a Christian labouring man, living and dying by this blessed rule: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you?" As long as he lives, he gets God's blessing out of

his mother earth, in peace and content, without tormenting care ; and when he departs, he dies not, but falls asleep in the bosom of the same earth, in sure and certain hope of an infinite blessing in heaven. May such be our happy, though most undeserved portion, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD !

SERMON CXCIV.

THE UNSPEAKABLE GIFT¹.

2 COR. ix. 15.

“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift.”

THE Gift, the free Gift, the Gift of God, are all of them expressions occurring in the New Testament with a higher and more mysterious meaning, than we are generally apt to take notice of. We are accustomed, as we read, to think only of this or that mercy, which in the particular part of the Scriptures happens to come into our mind: especially, I suppose, when “the free gift” is mentioned, we are apt to think most of this one great thing, namely, the pardon and forgiveness of our sins, by the death and passion of our LORD and SAVIOUR. And truly that is an unspeakable gift, and by it alone are we made capable of any other mercy or gift at all: yet it seems very plain, that pardon and forgiveness by the Blood of our crucified LORD is not the very gift, of which so much is said in St. Paul’s epistles and elsewhere. That gift rather means, the HOLY SPIRIT of the FATHER and the SON, poured into the hearts of Christian men to make them partakers of CHRIST. It is the LORD GOD, the BLESSED COMFORTER, dwelling in our hearts to unite us to the FATHER and the SON: according to His own promise: “If a man love ME, he will keep MY words, and MY

¹ Preached at a collection for Church-building.

FATHER will love him, and WE will come unto him, and make OUR abode with him."

To make this plain to you, I will bring forward all the places, where the gift of GOD is mentioned, and you will see how well they suit with this meaning, some of them not at all admitting of any other.

The first, and the key to all the rest, is our LORD's own saying to the woman of Samaria: "If thou knewest the gift of GOD, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give ME to drink, thou wouldest have asked of HIM, and HE would have given thee living water." The gift of GOD then is the same as the living water which our LORD here and elsewhere speaks of: and this, we know by St. John's own words, "He spake of the SPIRIT, which they that believe on HIM should receive²." The SPIRIT of GOD, received in Holy Baptism, is the Living Water which purifies the whole man: and "as every good gift, and every perfect gift cometh down from the FATHER of Lights," so this in a more especial way, in a way which no words can express, is, as our LORD HIMSELF teaches, "The gift of God."

So it is called repeatedly in the Acts of the Apostles. St. Peter on the day of Pentecost, inviting his hearers into the Church, says, "Repent and be baptized every one of you, and ye shall receive the gift of the HOLY GHOST³." Afterwards, when he had preached to Cornelius, they who came with him were astonished, "because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the HOLY GHOST." And giving an account of it afterwards to the Christians of Jerusalem, he uses the word "gift" in the same sense: "God gave those Gentiles the like gift as HE did unto us."

So to Simon the Sorcerer, who wanted to buy for money such spiritual powers as the Apostles had, a curse was spoken by the same St. Peter, because he thought "the gift of GOD might be purchased for money⁴." Here again the HOLY SPIRIT is described as being the gift of GOD. St. Paul too, many times speaks the word in the same sense. As to the Ephesians: "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of CHRIST: wherefore HE saith, when HE ascended up on high, HE

² John vii. 39.

³ Acts ii. 28; x. 45; xi. 17.

⁴ Acts viii. 20.

led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men⁵." This gift of CHRIST, bestowed after the Ascension, in sundry ways to sundry persons, what is it but the holy and promised COMFORTER? No doubt then, the same Divine Person is intended, where the same Apostle speaks a little before of his having been made a minister of the Gospel, "according to the gift of the grace of God given unto him."

It is the same again, where to the Romans he speaks of "the grace of God, and the gift by grace:" first, that is, of His free pardon and favour obtained for us by the Blood of CHRIST, and then of the actual gift of His SPIRIT, whereby that favour is sealed and brought home to every one; and where just after he mentions certain persons, as receiving "abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness;" the gift of righteousness plainly is, true holiness poured into the hearts of men by the HOLY SPIRIT.

Lastly, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, setting forth the great danger of wilful sin after baptism, his word is, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the HOLY GHOST, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance⁶:" thus again intimating, that to taste of the heavenly gift is to be made partaker of the HOLY GHOST.

These which I have now gone through, are all the places in the New Testament, in which the gift of God, or the heavenly gift, is spoken of, besides that one in the Text: "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." It seems almost certain, therefore, that here also the sanctifying SPIRIT is meant: the LORD and Giver of life, the gift which includes in itself all other gifts. Well, indeed, is it called unspeakable: for what tongue of man or angel can speak worthily of so great a thing as this? GOD the HOLY GHOST, the Good Spirit, in whose unity the SON liveth and reigneth with the FATHER:—that HE should come and make His Tabernacle in the souls and bodies of the children of Adam, of man His enemy: that HE should vouchsafe to abide there for years, striving against sin and corruption, and changing the heart more and more into the holiness of our LORD and SAVIOUR HIMSELF! Such a thing could never be thought or imagined, much less can it be uttered by the tongue

⁵ Eph. iv. 7; iii. 7. Rom. v. 15. 17.

⁶ Heb. vi. 4.

of man: but the more unspeakable it is, the more it should fill our hearts; and the text seems to teach us, that we do well to remember it, and mix it up with all our thanksgivings to the MOST HIGH, for any of the lesser mercies, which make part of it or flow from it; just as we make mention of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, His merits and sufferings, in all our petitions to God.

For how is it that the Unspeakable Gift comes to be mentioned in this part of St. Paul's letter? He had just been speaking of a collection which he had sent to have made in several Churches at a distance, for the benefit of the poorer Christians at Jerusalem. He had been rejoicing in the bountiful and loving temper which the Christians had shown, among whom that collection was made. And he says concerning that kind of charity, that is, alms offered in the Church for CHRIST's sake, that it carries with it a great blessing, over and above the immediate benefit of the persons for whom it is raised. "The administration of this service," he says, "not only supplieth the necessities of the Saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God." It lifts up the hearts of those who receive it, with all thankfulness to CHRIST our SAVIOUR, for many great and signal blessings at once.

"They glorify God," he says, "for your professed subjection to the Gospel of CHRIST:" that is, "the Christians of the Mother Church of Jerusalem, where the Gospel was first preached, rejoice in the alms which you send to them, not only for the relief they themselves get by it, but also because of the proof it gives them of the wide growth of the Gospel; that you Gentiles, so far away, should nevertheless be Christians, feeling yourselves brethren with them, and ready to give abundantly for their wants, as members of the same body. And as they thank God for making you Christians, so they pray earnestly in your behalf; they have a longing desire to know you and do you good, which can only be satisfied in this world by earnestly praying for you."

It is a beautiful and glorious picture, which the holy Apostle here sets before us, of one part of the Communion of Saints. Christians as far removed from one another as Jerusalem was from Corinth, not speaking the same language, not knowing one another's names, not in the least likely to meet ever at all in this world, yet with all their hearts trying to do one another good, and obtain a blessing each for his distant brethren by his prayers.

No wonder that the thought coming strongly before him, of members of CHRIST so distant in the flesh, yet so closely bound together in the spirit, their prayers wafted up by their several Angels, and meeting and mingling together, like clouds of incense before the mercy-seat in heaven: no wonder that the sound of their many voices, all praising God and blessing one another, full of all love and thankfulness: no wonder, I say, that the thought and hearing of these things filled the affectionate Apostle with that eager joy, that he could not, if one may say so, contain himself, but cried out with all his heart, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

Because this holy agreement and fellow-feeling, of so many Christians in so many different quarters, was a kind of token, to the very eye, of their all being inhabited by the same HOLY SPIRIT, all made living stones in the same true Temple of the LORD, all made partakers of the same great unspeakable gift. It was like the rushing wind, filling all the house; or like the fiery tongues, settling on every one: it brought home to the believing soul, with irresistible force, the gracious presence of the COMFORTER.

Now the same holy and adoring joy which then filled the heart of St. Paul, is even now offered, by the grace and providence of ALMIGHTY God, to the members of His holy universal Church, as often as they are invited to give alms in the old way, offering them in the Church, for some good and charitable purpose, far away perhaps from themselves. For though so many years have passed, we trust that we are still, by God's especial grace, in the same body, the same household of God, as St. Paul and his Corinthians were; and if we are of the same body, then we are sure the same SPIRIT is among us; nay (most awful is the thought), HE is within us, to move men's hearts one towards another; to cause us to be of one mind in an house; to make us take interest in the wants of our brethren at a distance, not simply out of human pity, but because they are brethren, "faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit."

We are not in general used, I should fear, to think of Church collections of alms in this sort of way. Too many account it just a convenient method of gathering what little can be spared, and go away and think no more of it.

But as nothing which is done in God's house ought to be thought so lightly of, so we have seen that a charitable gathering there is such a thing, as, in the first and best days, filled the heart of the zealous Apostle, and caused it to overflow with joy. We are bidden to be followers of him, as he also was of CHRIST. Let us try to have such thoughts of a Church gathering as he had: faint and low they must be in comparison with his, yet they may be the same kind of thoughts. We may use ourselves to consider these occasions, as each being one among the ten thousand ways, in which our LORD and His SPIRIT show themselves in His Church.

All Church gatherings may be thus considered: but in this which we have to-day recommended to us, there is something over and above this.

For, in the first place, it is recommended to us by our Bishop: and the approbation of their Bishop is always a special comfort to good Christians, and his presence and direction is a token of CHRIST'S.

Next, the particular purpose of to-day's gathering, is to raise a sum for building and enlarging Churches within this bishoprick to which we belong. Now, a Church, a building set apart and hallowed by the Bishop's prayers and blessings, for solemn prayers, and teaching, and administration of the Sacraments, is one of the plainest outward signs of the presence of the HOLY SPIRIT among us: being the very place where our LORD has promised to be, since there, whoever are gathered together, are surely gathered in His Name.

When we ask an offering, therefore, for the building of Churches, we do in a more particular manner remind one another of the holy unspeakable Gift. Our very asking means no less than this: "You have been so many years members of the Body of CHRIST, endued with His SPIRIT; you have come here from time to time, trusting to His promise, have heard His holy word, have received His blessed Sacraments; and now some of your brethren at a distance, who for one cause or another have less share in these outward and visible means of grace, seek to you for aid to be brought nearer their SAVIOUR.

Perhaps they are inhabitants of some crowded town, where even if they desired to worship God in His Church, they would

find it almost impossible to gain admittance, so few and so small are the holy buildings in comparison of the number of people.

Perhaps (and this is the commoner case, in our part of England particularly) they might indeed find room if they came to Church; but the Church is so far from them, that it would be a great charity to help them to one at their own doors.

Perhaps their Church is old and decayed, or so unworthily and meanly fitted up, as to be quite unworthy of the house of the MOST HIGH; so that to let it stay as it is, would be bringing on us the rebuke of the LORD by His Prophet: "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house to lie waste?"

Surely in each of these cases there is a call on us to feel for our brethren, who are less favourably circumstanced than ourselves. We know, or ought to know, the blessing of having the Church close to us, of being able, without much trouble, to find a place in it when we go there; therefore we ought to make a point of sparing something for our less fortunate brethren, who have less of these helps to draw near God, these tokens of the unspeakable gift. It is but doing as we would be done by.

A good and fair beginning has been made in the work; such as, by God's blessing, may help to save many souls; and one way of obtaining that blessing on what has been already done will be, not to grow weary in well-doing, but still to go on offering of what we can spare.

A great deal remains to be done. For taking the whole number of persons in the Diocese, and comparing it with the whole number of places in the several Churches, it appears that there is not room for one-fourth of the people. And another thing to be considered is, that in many crowded places nothing like this quantity of room can be found. In one town, where there are forty-five thousand, and more, there are places for only seven thousand four hundred. Who can doubt that it will be a real charity to help in providing for such cases as that? or a real act of devotion, to give something, as David did, out of regard to God's honour and glory, for making God's service more magnificent, and worthier of a Being so great and glorious?

And may I not be allowed to say, that those especially seem called on to contribute to this fund, who have had the benefit of

Churches long ago builded for them, without being called on to contribute any thing themselves.

And this indeed is the case generally with regard to the inhabitants of any country which God's Providence long ago made Christian. As the children there born are made members of CHRIST before they can know or chuse any thing, so when they grow up, they find a holy place made ready for their worship, as part of a regular sacred inheritance, without any cost or labour of their own. Thus, if they be at all thoughtful persons, the ALMIGHTY brings home to them the fact of their election; their very outward eyes, among the first things they see, are made aware of this great and distinguishing mercy, that they are chosen in CHRIST out of the world, to be made partakers of His holiness and salvation, while so many others are left in darkness and the shadow of death. It is supposed that not above one in four of those who now live on the earth are called to be outwardly and nominally Christians. All that we see are so, and therefore too many of us have thoughtlessly esteemed it a matter of course, and forgotten to be duly thankful for it. Let us not be always so childish. Let us realize to ourselves, and never forget, that our being Christians at all is an instance of mysterious favour towards us, denied to the far greater part of our fellow creatures, and vouchsafed to us, our friends, kindred, and countrymen, of God's free and sovereign grace, surely without any desert of our own. The more we meditate on this plain truth, and bring it home to ourselves, the greater surely will be our fear, lest we fall short in our acknowledgments of His merciful election. The less we ourselves had to do with the first foundation of these our Churches, or with our own admission to them, the more earnestly, as it seems to me, would a right-minded person, a man having true faith, lay hold of all opportunities to praise and thank God for the gift of His SPIRIT in His Church, not by words only, but by some free and cheerful offering.

Only let us take care that what we give, be given reverently; not merely given, but offered, with true and real thought of the Awful Presence we are in; and that it be not offered, as I fear sometimes happens, with a heathenish mind, as though alms had some power to make up for sins in some other kind, and prove in

themselves satisfactory to ALMIGHTY GOD. Again, that it be offered thankfully, not grudgingly ; devoutly, not lightly and at random : and that whilst we are sparing an alms to Churches elsewhere, we lose not the blessing which those alms might have hoped for, by neglecting our own Church, or coming to it profanely.

SERMON CXCVI.

PAST MERCIES, A PLEDGE OF MERCIES TO COME.

PHILIP. i. 6.

“Being confident of this very thing, that HE which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of JESUS CHRIST.”

THOSE whom the grace and good providence of God has led to think at all of their own spiritual condition, are generally very earnest in seeking out “comfortable texts,”—passages of Scripture which fill them with pleasant hopes of God’s forgiveness and favour towards them. It should seem as if this Epistle to the Philippians were written in part with express purpose of meeting this our natural desire, and supplying comfort to sick souls. It is an Epistle full of consolation from beginning to end; yet full of warning and instruction too. It is full of consolation, as might be expected from an epistle to that church, which of all to whom St. Paul wrote, appears to have received the Gospel the most faithfully and affectionately from the very first. The Epistle is also full of warning and instruction, as being written in evil times; times when, besides their own natural corruption, Christians were on every side beset with especial snares and perils. Both comfort and warning may be drawn largely from this, the very first sentence of the Epistle: the comfort is plainly spoken out; the warning is not darkly hinted.

“I thank my God,” says the Apostle, “upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that HE which hath begun

a good work in you will perform it until the day of JESUS CHRIST." He does not know how to say enough of the joy he had in thinking of them; of the earnest welcome they gave to the Gospel at first, and of their steadiness, continuing still to profess it, for all the persecution and tribulation they had to endure. How the Philippians first received the Gospel, we know from the sixteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. It began from the house of a woman named Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened first of all to attend to those things that were spoken of Paul. But after a short time, the multitude rose up against him: he was beaten and imprisoned, with much shame, but God opened the prison doors by an earthquake, and the heathen jailor being converted and baptized, and the heathen magistrates alarmed, the Apostle was, for that time, allowed to depart free and safe. Thus the Philippians "received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." And as they received it, so they kept it, rejoicing to communicate with the Apostle, both in his bonds and in his poverty. These were the men to whom the Apostle was speaking, when he said, "He was confident of this, that he which had begun a good work in them would perform it until the day of JESUS CHRIST." The comfort and encouragement of these words is quite plain, as I said before: to be praised so earnestly by such a man as St. Paul, speaking by the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, and to have him express such strong hopes of their continual improvement and final salvation, must have been as comfortable, as encouraging, as any words they could hear in this world.

But if they duly considered the words, they must have perceived them to be words of warning also. For, first of all, after all they had done, the Apostle gives them to understand, that he considered them as only having made a beginning. Yet they had done what most men would consider as very great things indeed. They had clung to St. Paul, or rather to his Master, through several years of shame and danger, and had been more earnest and forward than any other church in contributing to supply his necessities. Should the like trying times occur again, which of us all would not praise himself, and think he had done great things, if he came any where near their exertions? Yet, behold, their exertions were but a *beginning*.

Another point of warning hinted in the words of the text is

this: that the whole credit of the good work wrought in the Philippians is ascribed by St. Paul to GOD ALMIGHTY, none of it to themselves. HE which hath begun a good work in you, HE, and no other, I trust, will perform it. Plainly, he wished them to be thoroughly aware, how very dangerous and destructive it would be, should they once begin to value themselves on their own growth in grace, and count it their own work, and not the work of HIM who alone can sanctify souls. The tone of the whole verse is as if he had said, "I see in you a good and hopeful beginning, such a beginning as fills me with joyful expectation; but remember, I beseech you, that it is but a beginning, and remember, too, that it is not your's, but God's. For on your bearing these things in mind will depend the fulfilment of the good work,—your perfection and glorification in the day of JESUS CHRIST."

The lesson which this verse especially seems to hold out to all Christians is this: That it should be our comfort, as it is our duty, to consider the past favours of GOD ALMIGHTY as so many pledges for the future, so many tokens of His kind intentions towards us.

St. Paul was confident, that the good work of GOD, in those his beloved Philippian converts, would be performed, that is, carried on to end in glory, in the day when all works shall have an end. Why was St. Paul confident of this? Besides other reasons which he might have, this very thing made him confident; namely, that GOD had begun to work in them. St. Paul felt thus with regard to the Philippians; and why should not all Christians feel the same, in respect of themselves, and of their brethren, in whom they see or feel the mercies of GOD? Why should we stand loitering and lingering, accounting this duty too hard, that temptation too strong, such a commandment too high and spiritual, such an example too perfect to be followed? Why should we not, one and all, thank GOD, and take courage, both in respect of ourselves and others, recollecting what reason we have to be sure of GOD's gracious mind and purpose?

The ground of such thankful confidence must be, that all improvement, all spiritual blessings, come of GOD, and not of ourselves. For every man may judge, if he will, by every day's sad experience, how vain it would be to trust in himself. If your

growth in grace, such as it is, were your own work, you would indeed have little reason to hope for any long continuance of it. For you know how frail your own works are, how unsteady your good resolutions, how soon, when you are left to yourself, you allow your good habits to wear away, and evil ones to get the dominion over you. Every one who watches his own heart at all must know enough of this, from continual experience, to hinder him from having the least confidence in any good beginnings of his own.

But now we know that we are not in our own hands, but in His hands, who never can change, Who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. "GOD is not as man, that HE should lie, nor as the son of man, that HE should repent. Hath HE said, and shall HE not do it? or hath HE spoken, and shall HE not make it good?" We are sure, then, that when HE begins, HE will also make an end; His power cannot fail, nor His will contradict itself: when, therefore, in His power and mercy HE has plainly begun to work men's spiritual good, we have all the reason we can have in this world to hope the very best for them; all the reason in the world to take courage in doing them all the good we can.

For example: when by the Providence of GOD a child is born in a Christian country, it is a sign that GOD would have him baptized, and new-born in the Church of CHRIST. When he is baptized, that is a token that GOD means him all the blessings of the Gospel. Nobody need despair of him, nor think his pains thrown away in labouring to teach or correct that child, to restrain him in evil or encourage him in good. Child or man, how froward soever he may be, he is one whom our LORD has sealed for His own, so far as to reckon him one of His own chosen people and Church on earth; nay, more, HE has made him a member of HIMSELF: and this surely is sign enough of GOD's gracious purpose towards him, and reason enough for all who love CHRIST to hope against hope in endeavouring to bring him to GOD.

Again: our SAVIOUR has trusted His Church with the seal of Confirmation also, for a further token of His having begun and still continuing, in each of her faithful children, the work of their spiritual improvement. The SPIRIT which is given to believing

and obedient souls, by laying on of the Bishop's hands, is the SPIRIT of ghostly strength, of Christian knowledge, and of the the fear of the LORD. And whenever, at any future time, a cloud comes over your mind, and you are inclined to doubt whether, towards *you*, God has not forgotten to be gracious, (I speak now to those only who have been, by God's Providence, duly confirmed,) let me beseech you, in those dark and dispiriting thoughts, to turn your minds to that moment when the hand of God's chosen servant was stretched out over you, to bless you in His Name; and the prayer pronounced, that you might continue His for ever. Be sure, it was a special token of His mercy: of His mercy, who cannot change. Accept it as such, and make it a reason for cheerful hope, and watchful, humble obedience. Whatever your backslidings have since been, your having been confirmed by laying on of the Bishop's hands is one token of God's pardon and grace to you, the moment you turn to Him in true repentance. Without repentance, I do not deny that the same Confirmation makes your case worse; as do all the means of grace, abused. But still on God's part the saying holds true, and nothing but our own sloth or wickedness can baffle it; that the good work, begun in Baptism and Confirmation, must be taken as a pledge of mercy and salvation at last.

Now what has been said of Confirmation, is still in a higher degree true concerning the holy Supper of the LORD: of which it is clearly His blessed will, that all who have been confirmed should speedily become worthy partakers. Such as duly receive those holy mysteries are instructed by the Church "most heartily to thank God, for vouchsafing to feed them with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of His SON our SAVIOUR, and for assuring us thereby of His favour and goodness towards us, and that we are in truth members united to the spiritual Body of His SON, which is the blessed company of all faithful people; and are also heirs through hope of His everlasting Kingdom, through the merits of the most precious death and passion of His dear SON." And in humble confidence they are further instructed to pray, that our heavenly FATHER, who has just given us such a mark of His favour, would go on to "assist us with His grace, that we may continue in that holy

fellowship, and do all such good works as HE has prepared for us to walk in."

I have repeated to you almost the whole of this Collect, showing you most exactly the meaning of the Apostle, when he teaches you to regard the past mercies of the ALMIGHTY as pledges of further mercies to come. The Holy Communion, the greatest of those mercies on earth, because it is what brings you nearest to our blessed SAVIOUR—is also the most distinct pledge of continued and increasing mercies to come. Because GOD has just given us the very Body and Blood of His SON, therefore we come boldly to the throne of grace, asking for help to do those good works which HE has prepared for us to walk in.

Thus you see how the means of grace, offered, one after another, to Christian people in the Church of GOD, ought to serve as so many reasons for depending on HIM for more and more grace: so many fearful condemnations to those who go back, or do not go forward. And this holds true of every person, whether he chooses to attend to GOD's offers, and employ His means of grace, or no. It is still equally true, surely, that our Blessed LORD means you mercy every time HE invites you to His holy Table; every time HE causes you to be reminded of your Baptism, which you very likely have all but forgotten, or of Confirmation, which you may probably have slighted or profaned. These are, all of them, His gracious beginnings; and where they are, you may be quite certain HE is waiting to do you good, the moment you will turn to HIM. His mind is towards you, as it was towards His ancient people; to whom His words were such as these: "Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

The means of grace, such as I have now mentioned, are common to the whole Church. But let us now consider a case of a more private and personal kind, between GOD and each man's own conscience. Let us suppose any one, after years, it may be, of carelessness and irreligion, touched with some feeling of his sins, some thought of his spiritual condition. Every such thought and feeling, depend on it, is a sure sign that GOD intends that man to repent in earnest. If you let such misgivings pass un-

improved, and hurry back again like a dog to his vomit, do not think you are just where you were. No: you are in a much worse condition; God has knocked again at the door of your heart, and you have again refused to open, and let HIM in to dwell there. On the other hand, if by His grace you really open your ear to instruction, then you have this blessed assurance, that the very first scruple thus arising in you is a proof that God has not cast you off: you may be forgiven and saved; only lose no time, lest this mercy too be thrown away.

And when you have once begun, really and steadily, to mind the great work of your salvation—when you find yourself in good truth more earnest and fervent in prayer, more awake and alive to the presence of ALMIGHTY God, more concerned to please your SAVIOUR in all things,—then you may humbly consider, that every hour of real improvement is a fresh sign of His gracious purpose towards you: thus you may quiet any misgivings, which either sloth, or discontent, or (as sometimes happens) bodily infirmity may at times excite within you. Only be very much on your guard against anything like praising yourself. Remember the Pharisee in the parable: a good work had begun in him; for punctual payment of God's dues, and fasting to keep himself in order, were surely, so far, good things: but he threw all the good of them away, he turned them into occasions of evil, by trusting in them, and valuing himself upon them. Never forget, that this snare is laid for you. When Satan cannot prevent good beginnings, his next point is, to get you to praise yourself for them; not always to praise yourself in words, but often, what is still more dangerous, to *think* over your own praise silently. This is a deep and most enticing art; and those who know, by their own conscience, that they are apt to be led away by it, and to sit musing on their own good deeds, have as much need as any sinner in the world to watch and pray without ceasing.

However, thus much is certain: that nothing *besides* amendment in practice, purer and holier thoughts, words, and actions, nothing short of this can be safely depended on as a token of men's final salvation. As far as we dare to judge of it at all, we must judge of it by that rule, and by no other: not by our much *knowledge* of divine words, no, nor of divine things either; nor yet by our quick and strong feelings, when we read or hear of the

sufferings of our SAVIOUR, or other affecting parts of holy Scripture; much less are you to judge yourself in a state of grace, because you have *more* knowledge, or *more* good feeling, than many or most of your acquaintance. These are, indeed, broken reeds to lean on, without good practice to follow them, good practice persevering to the end.

And observe, I mean by good *practice*, not what the world means, only or chiefly, doing your duty to your neighbour, but I mean especially, doing your duty to your SAVIOUR: trying to live by faith in His Cross, to please HIM in all things, for HE died for you. *These* things will bring a man peace at the last; as for high knowledge and quick feelings, and thankful recollections of mercies received in times past, they are all good, as beginnings: but if not followed up, they may, and will, be lost.

Who ever knew more of the truth, or felt divine things more deeply, or had more Christian good works to look back on, than had the great Apostle St. Paul? But he never durst look back; he counted not himself to have obtained; he kept himself in order, body and soul, lest, having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway.

“Are we, then, never to be certain? never to be assured of our final salvation?” We know of no promise that we shall be so here in this present world. But we do know that we are commanded, as long as we are in this world, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling: we do know, that the great Owner of the world begun by His SPIRIT a good work in us, when HE called us to be Christians, and has given us many tokens since, that HE will perform that work unto the end, if our sin and unbelief drive HIM not away. This we do know for certain; and therefore we may be sure that it is wisest and best, making no question of God’s merciful purpose, to judge ourselves strictly by His plain commands, and in deep humiliation for our past unworthiness, and strict purposes of future improvement, to submit ourselves to His good SPIRIT, for such measures of comfort and assurance as HE knows to be best for us. As long as we choose for ourselves, we are in danger; but when we can once, truly and heartily, leave HIM to choose for us, then it will be well with us, and then we shall be safe.

SERMON CXCVII.

THE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS.

PHILIP. iii. 18, 19.

“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of CHRIST: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.”

THIS letter of St. Paul to the Philippians, as is clearly enough pointed out by the beginning of the first chapter, addresses itself particularly to well-meaning Christians, people who are so far honest in heart as to wish to serve God sincerely, and not make void His Fatherly care in sending His ministers among them, and providing them with the means of grace. Now whereas such an amiable and right disposition is not seldom blemished, more or less, by indolence of mind, making men unwilling to consider deeply, and look unpleasant truths in the face; and especially, making it hard for them to believe that any error commonly received, and embraced perhaps by persons whom they like, can be very ruinous to men's souls;—observe how plainly the Apostle speaks out, what earnest and vehement language he uses; so that no one, regarding his judgment, (or rather the judgment of the HOLY SPIRIT by him,) could ever after think slightly of the sin and error here denounced by him. “Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you *even* weeping, that they are the

enemies of the Cross of CHRIST : whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."

To make the right use of these words, we must consider what sort of people the Apostle is here describing. Not, I should think, professed Heathens, but rather, lukewarm, insincere Christians ; for if they were not outwardly of that faith, there would have been little or no danger of well-meaning believers imitating them. But suppose them, in show and profession, Christians ; suppose them to make up a very large portion of the visible Church of Christ, and the need of warning, of severe and constant warning against them, is clear at once, and very pressing. Not of unbelievers, then, but of insincere, inconsistent believers, is St. Paul speaking here in the text. And he seems as if, do what he would, he could hardly find words to express his sense of their peril. "I have told you before of them, and now tell you, *even weeping*, that they are the enemies of the Cross of CHRIST ;" not simply enemies, but *the* enemies, the worst enemies of that Name, besides which "there is none other under Heaven given unto men, whereby they must be saved."

And no wonder their end should be, what he next tells us, "destruction ;" since they obstinately cast away from them the only hope and refuge of sinners, the Cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. This warning the Apostle accompanied with his tears. "I have told you of them," says he, "before, and now tell you *even weeping* : " weeping with regret and sorrow for them, that they should cast themselves into such misery ; and with fear and anxiety for his own faithful people, lest they should be any how beguiled by their example. "They are the enemies of the Cross of CHRIST : whose end is destruction." These are his inspired words of warning, put first, as it seems, to rouse his hearers, and make them listen more attentively, to know what class of persons they might be, who, professing like themselves to be Christians, could deserve and receive so dreadful a sentence. And he leaves no one at a loss to know ; the words that follow point out to every one, in a way which cannot be mistaken, what sort of persons he has in view. "Their God is their belly, and their glory is in their shame," because "they mind earthly things." Selfish, sensual persons, entirely swallowed up in the

gross and brutish pursuits of this present evil world, could not be more emphatically described.

“Their God is their belly;” that is, as minds sincerely pious and Christian are taken up with the thought of God, and make it always their first care, whatever they do, to please HIM; so these men are taken up with those low and mean appetites which men have in common with beasts: eating and drinking and bodily delights are their first care, the thing which they long for, the object for which they live and act. One would think the mere pointing out to such persons, how they wilfully degrade themselves, how they let themselves, on purpose, down, as far as they may, to the condition of brutes,—one would think this ought to be enough to produce something like repentance in them. If not as Christians, surely as men, they must feel it a shame and a reproach, to be wholly given up to the body. So one might expect; but what is the fact?

“Their glory,” says St. Paul, “is in their shame;” they are grown so besotted, so brutish, by long indulgence of their bodily appetites, that they pride themselves and exult among their companions, each in being more wicked than another. For instance; among habitual drunkards, is it not made a matter of boasting to be mightier than the rest to drink wine, and of more strength to mingle strong drink: that is, in other words, to be a more hardened and reprobate sinner, and to go further in offending God? Men do not, I know, distinctly *mean* this: in many cases, they do not think *at all* of God when they thus affront HIM with glorying in their sins: but who made them so hardened, so reckless, as to leave HIM out of their thoughts? Was it not their own wilful corruption, in giving way more and more to passions which they knew to be wrong, to imaginations which they ought to have kept in order?

If any man say, his passions were strong, his nature weak, and though indeed he knew better, he had not strength to act upon that knowledge; here again he forgets, inexcusably, that he was not left to his own weak nature. He forgets that ALMIGHTY GOD, on whom he might have called if he would when he gave way to wilful sin,—that HOLY SPIRIT of Grace, which is always close enough at hand, and surely always able to help him out of any, the most overpowering, temptation.

It is for want of sincere prayer, timely begun and steadily kept up, that people go on yielding to their passions, till conscience is seared as with a hot iron, and they come absolutely to glory in their shame. From beginning to end, therefore, of this wretched progress, the disgrace and the sin is all men's own; they must not accuse frail nature, when they had God's good SPIRIT to help them; they must not say it was forgetfulness of God, not wilful defiance of HIM, when they knew it was their own doing, in spite of many and many a warning, which brought them into such a state, that they could not well help forgetting HIM. Nobody ever, among Christians, except by his own fault, falls into such a condition, as that his glory should be in his shame.

But observe next what is mentioned as the root and ground of all this mischief: "They mind earthly things;" or as the words properly mean, "They are earthly-minded," not heavenly-minded: all their thoughts, plans, and wishes, savour of this world and not of the next. Observe, I say, this earthly temper, to what, of course, it will bring men's souls. It will make them "enemies of the Cross of CHRIST;" their end destruction, their belly their God, and their worst shame their pride and glory. To many it seems a matter of course, a thing quite to be taken for granted, that living in the world amongst other men, they should not only follow the customs, but have the mind, of the world: "they must do as other men do." And the Gospel of CHRIST is very far from encouraging men to affect singularity. We are not required to go out of the world, but continuing as we generally must in the world, to set our minds upon something better. If we will not, there is no remedy, we must become enemies of the Cross of CHRIST. It is worth our while to consider more distinctly, how this grievous effect follows upon that earthly mind, which so many seem to consider as a mere pardonable failing.

First, If people will give themselves up to the hopes and desires of this present world;—if their hearts are entirely taken up with making a fortune, with enjoying themselves, or any thing else of the like kind, which, however important it may seem to us now, is sure after a little while to pass away and become as nothing;—they cannot possibly judge aright of the deep heinousness of sin before God, or of the infinite value

of what CHRIST has done to redeem us from its sad consequences. For instance, take a covetous man; the love of money and of self-indulgence has so worked itself into his very heart and mind, that it seems to him a matter of course to make that his rule in all things: he cannot, as it were, understand how any one should do otherwise. What the Scripture tells us, then, of God's anger against covetousness; the woe denounced on those restless men who add house to house and field to field; the sentence of St. Paul, when he says, that the love of money is the root of all evil, and of our SAVIOUR, representing the rich man in the parable as condemned for choosing his good things in this world:—all these things will seem overstrained, strange, and unaccountable, to the worldly man: he will not enter at all into them, and however he may confess all in words, as he must, or deny the Scriptures, his heart will not really assent to them. How then should he possibly have a right notion of the danger he has brought himself into, by indulging that kind of temper? and not knowing the danger, how can he value the deliverance as he ought? how can he be duly thankful for the unspeakable love of the SON of GOD, in pouring out His soul unto death to deliver him from those very sins?

But the Apostle says of this earthly mind, that it makes men not only indifferent, but direct enemies, to the Cross of CHRIST: that is, it makes them unwilling to receive into their hearts the true doctrine of JESUS our LORD, suffering and dying to reconcile us sinners to His FATHER. It does not always make men unwilling to confess this doctrine with their lips; on the contrary, I fear we must own it, by too frequent experience, possible, to talk well of the Great Atonement, and take a pleasure in showing to others how much men know on the subject, while their ordinary behaviour convicts them of still minding earthly things. For it is one thing to converse skilfully, and be ready with Scripture texts, about the Doctrine of the Cross, and it is another thing, to receive that blessed doctrine sincerely into your heart and conduct. An earthly-minded man may do the one, but he cannot in the nature of things do the other, without putting off his earthly mind. For what is it we mean, when we speak of receiving the Doctrine of the Cross into our heart?

We mean the same that our SAVIOUR did, when HE bade those who would be His disciples "take up their Cross daily and follow HIM." We mean the same that the Church means, when it tells us that our profession is to be made like unto our SAVIOUR CHRIST; that "as HE died and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness." The change is so great, from an earthly mind to a mind according to the Cross of CHRIST, that it is likened to death itself and resurrection, the passing from one world to another. It is so painful in many respects, there being always corrupt nature to subdue, and too often bad habits to root out, that he who sets about it must make up his mind to take up his cross daily: that is, to suffer something daily for his SAVIOUR's sake. He must do what he would wish to leave undone, and leave undone what he would wish to do; must tear himself away from wrong pleasures, though evil custom may have made him feel as if he could not do without them; and must apply himself to irksome duties, in spite of a corrupt and indolent heart, which would fain persuade him he has done enough already. This must be done for CHRIST's sake; to please HIM who has performed and suffered such unspeakable things for us, and with a thorough conviction that without HIM, without His HOLY SPIRIT assisting our weak endeavours, nothing of ours can be good, right, or holy. This is receiving the doctrine of the Cross into our heart and mind and practice. And how should the struggle be other than severe, when a soul, entangled with the world, and accustomed to please itself, right or wrong, endeavours to enter on such a path as this? And how should those lost and miserable men, who determine to please themselves at any rate, and will not be weaned from their earthly mind;—how should they be other than enemies and haters of that which so disturbs their false peace, and convicts them of being so much in the wrong?

Now, although I trust there are not many thus desperate and reckless in hatred of the Cross, it is a truth never to be forgotten, that the spirit which makes men such, the earthly minded, anti-Christian spirit, is, and is active, more or less, in all. The flesh, the carnal and wicked mind, which is enmity against God, exerts itself, as much as ever we will let it, against the SPIRIT, the good

principle, which would teach them the mind of JESUS CHRIST. In whatever measure men give way to this, whether in one sin or in another, so far they set themselves against CHRIST, and become the enemies of His Cross; so far, as much as in them lies, they undo what HE intended, when HE shed His blood for them. There are none so good, but they too often have occasion to lament this; for want of seriousness and diligence in prayer, the great concern of all is not so present to their recollection as it ought to be: their thoughts wander more than they need; they do and say too many things, by which others, who perhaps look up to them, are encouraged in what is wrong and unchristian, and are led to doubt whether there is any thing in religion, seeing that those, who appeared to have so much of it, could allow themselves in such irreligious liberties.

But if occasional wanderings like these do so much harm to the good cause, what shall we say to that too ordinary case, in which the whole conduct of a Christian person is, and is known to be, no better than a mere minding of earthly things? St. Paul has told us in the text what such are; they are the enemies of the Cross of CHRIST; and how they come to be so, it has been now my endeavour to explain. It is a serious thought for us, every one. There is a war going on in the world, between the Cross of CHRIST and the powers of darkness: Satan, on the one side, trying to keep in subjection the lost souls of sinful men; the Cross of CHRIST, the one sufficient remedy, held up on the other side, by Almighty Power and infinite Mercy, for all who are willing to lay hold of it. It is a warfare in which you cannot stand by, and take no part with either; it being expressly declared concerning it, "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth."

Do not think, then, to go your own way, to please yourself and the world, to mind earthly things, and yet not to be against our SAVIOUR. True it is, if you resolutely take His part, and humbly depend on HIM for aid, you may very likely find the cost, even in this world, less than you expected. His good and gracious SPIRIT, given in answer to your fervent prayers, will smooth the way of duty for you, will make it practicable all along, and sooner or later, delightful too. But you must make up your mind to difficulties; you must not think much of enduring hardness, as a good soldier

of JESUS CHRIST. Some pain and trouble you may have, in resisting the threats of ill-disposed men ; still more, in disregarding their ridicule ; and most and sharpest of all, in overcoming your own weak nature, and turning away from pleasant sins. Expect such things beforehand ; prepare for them by prayer and good resolution ; depend not at all on yourself, but on God's HOLY SPIRIT to encounter them, and they need not overpower you when they come.

To conclude : If there be one thought above all others most apt to encourage and support a Christian in the severer parts of his earthly trial, it is surely the consideration, that, suffer what he will, if he suffer in the right spirit, for our SAVIOUR's sake and to His glory, that Divine SAVIOUR HIMSELF will reckon such a man as partaker of His sufferings, bearing His Cross after HIM. Again : if there be any thing done in the Church which more than all other things should acquaint us with this best of comforts,—any service which more than the rest would keep us close to our SAVIOUR's Cross,—it is the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ; the bread and wine which HIMSELF appointed to convey to true penitent hearts the full blessing of His death and sacrifice. How is it that any Christian, knowing himself as he must to be liable to sin and misery, can wilfully refuse the treasure of spiritual strength ? How is it that one who knows himself a sinner, should be careless of coming to our REDEEMER for pardon ? The explanation lies in two words : "They mind earthly things : " therefore in this, as in other respects, they behave themselves not as true believers, but as enemies of the Cross of CHRIST.

God grant that it be not so always : and as the best means of correcting so great an evil, may His grace be more and more thankfully received by those who have not yet forsaken His altar : and may their lives shine so brightly before men, that others seeing their good works, may be won to follow their good example, and glorify their FATHER which is in Heaven.

SERMON CXCVIII.

GOD'S FAMILY, A SCHOOL OF GOOD WORKS.

FOR THE SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT.

TITUS ii. 13, 14.

“The great GOD and our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, who gave HIMSELF for us, that HE might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto HIMSELF a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

As the Church draws nearer and nearer to Advent, the solemn season which she has set apart for meditation on CHRIST's second coming, she becomes more and more earnest in pressing on every Christian soul the absolute necessity of good works. She would have the thought of a terrible judgment to come, we know not how soon,—she would have this thought sink deep in all our hearts, and set us on preparing ourselves in good earnest, by hearty amendment while we are yet on our trial. For it will be too late to repent, and promise improvement, just as the sentence is going to be passed. Like a kind considerate guardian, therefore, the Church warns you to get ready, that you may not be ashamed before HIM at His coming.

And in to-day's Collect, more especially, she presses upon us immediate repentance, in consideration of what you owe to her. She speaks to you, and teaches you to pray, as one of God's own faithful people. She bids you recollect, that as a Christian you are a member of a holy society, a body of men chosen out of the world by our LORD JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF, expressly for the

purpose of serving HIM in all good and devout works. "We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture," His own household, His children and servants. A Christian, by God's ordinance, is no longer allowed to consider himself as standing alone in the world, but as one among many in a holy family. And this puts all his duties in a peculiar point of view, not always regarded as it ought to be, even by serious and well-meaning men.

This piece of instruction is conveyed in the text by the words "peculiar people." The title was at first applied to the holy seed, the children of Israel, when GOD had redeemed them to HIMSELF by bringing them out of the land of Egypt. HE gathered them together round Mount Sinai, and declared from heaven that HE had chosen them out of all the kingdoms of the world, to be a "peculiar treasure" to HIM: "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." The HOLY SPIRIT, by St. Peter, has taken up the expression, and applied it to all Christians. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of HIM who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." And here we find St. Paul, in a letter of most serious advice and exhortation to one whom he had ordained to be a Christian Bishop, giving no other account of the very purpose of our Blessed SAVIOUR in being made man, and dying for us: HE "gave HIMSELF for us, that HE might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto HIMSELF a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

The natural condition of all mankind is no better, you see, than a slavery, out of which we needed to be bought and redeemed, before we could be capable of the mighty blessings which God in His mercy had prepared for us: just as the Jews needed deliverance from Egypt, before they could be brought into Canaan. This slavery the whole world, both Jew and Gentile, were continually making worse, by the bad habits in which they indulged, and the power which they allowed evil spirits to gain over them. To use the expression of the holy Apostle, the world was "carnal, sold under sin." And it was quite impossible, and out of the question, that men should do any thing for their own deliverance.

But what sinners could not do for themselves, the eternal and ever blessed SON of GOD graciously undertook to do for them:

and that at the cost of His own precious blood. "HE gave HIMSELF for us, that HE might redeem us"—not, observe, from the *punishment* of sin only, but also from the *habit* and *temper* of sin. CHRIST died to redeem the sinner from those chains of evil custom, which have wound themselves so round him by length of time, that he feels as if shaking them off would be losing a part of himself. CHRIST died to redeem the drunkard from his drunkenness, the impure from his debauchery, the unkind from his malice, the godless and careless man from his love of this present world. All these and all other sins, with which in time past men's consciences have been stained, the ALMIGHTY FATHER is willing to pardon, for His dear and only SON's sake: and for His sake also in time to come, HE offers to all who truly repent the heavenly assistance of the HOLY SPIRIT, to keep them from their old sins, and make them go on in such good works as HE has promised to reward in Heaven. Thus our Blessed LORD on His Cross is made unto us complete Redemption, both from the power and punishment of sin.

Observe now, to what purpose the SON thus made us free. Not to leave us in such a condition as many seem to delight in imagining, the moment they hear of freedom and liberty—not to turn us out into the world, loose and independent of all restraint—but to make us more dependent on HIM, more closely confined within His laws, for every day and hour that we live as Christians. If you listen to your natural blind notions, they will represent it as a noble and desirable thing to have one's own way in all things, to please one's self without asking any one's leave: but look into the Word of God, seek the true meaning of the death of CHRIST, and you will learn a very different lesson. God's service, you will learn, is perfect freedom: the way to have your own will is to resign yourself up to the ALMIGHTY, and try to have no will but His. This lesson, learned perfectly, is the temper of blessed spirits in heaven. And in such measure as you, by the grace of God crowning your prayers and hearty endeavours, are enabled to have this mind, so far your life even here on earth will be indeed holy and heavenly. So far, having been, by the Cross of your SAVIOUR, "delivered out of the hands of your enemies," the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, you will serve HIM, as HE

invites you, "without fear, in holiness and righteousness before HIM, all the days of your life."

In a word, the peculiar, chosen people, whom CHRIST vouchsafed to redeem to HIMSELF, were meant, above all things in the world, to be always "zealous of good works;" not only rather good than evil, such as might pass well enough in the world, but "zealous," eager, earnest in good; every man striving and trying to be every day better than he was yesterday. And this is what our Collect means by "plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works," and what is there proposed as the only way for us to be at last "plenteously rewarded" of God.

And in order that each particular Christian might answer the better this intention of our gracious REDEEMER, HE has not left us to stand, as it were, separate and apart from one another, but has appointed that all who believe in HIM should make up one people, one household, one body; should feel a deep interest one in another, as if their welfare were bound up together: so that "whether one member suffer, all the members should suffer with it; or whether one member be honoured, all the members should rejoice with it." The whole plan of the Christian Church is, in short, as entirely opposite to the natural pride and self-sufficiency of man, as any thing can well be imagined. It will not let you for a moment dream that you can stand alone, and be independent.

This, as well as the Church's constant purpose of keeping you steady and zealous in good works, will appear more and more evidently, the more you consider, one by one, the methods of God in providing for that His family; the way by which HE admitted you into it, the way by which HE maintains you in it, the government set by HIM over His Church, the privileges offered to obedient members of the family, and the punishments in store for the froward and wicked.

As to the way in which it has pleased God to admit men into His household, the Church, it is, as you know, by having them baptized with water in the name of the Holy Trinity: to which baptism His providence called you, being yet helpless children; and thus taught you, at the very beginning, how vain it is to depend on one's self, since this first step of all, which put you in

a way towards happiness, had to be made for you entirely by others. The charity of Parents, of Sponsors, of Ministers, and of the whole Church of God, helped to introduce you to these blessings. You never could have attained them alone.

And when you were so introduced, care was taken to pledge and bind you, as far as an infant could be pledged and bound, to every kind of good work. Think seriously of that promise, "To keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of your life:" that is, in other words, to take God's will and word for your rule, to resign yourself to HIM as to your best friend, and make it the business of your life to please HIM.

If any be tempted to the irreligious fancy of saying, "they never made the promise; others made it in their name, and they cannot be bound by it;" certainly it is in their power, if they will, to disavow and break their word given to God: but let them remember, that at the same time they cast away all the privileges of their Christian calling. They can no longer plead God's promise to be their God, to help them with His grace in answer to their earnest prayers. Refusing to be bound by the covenant of their baptism, they refuse to be members of CHRIST, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven; they make themselves, as far as they can, such as the unbaptized heathen were, "having no hope, and without God in the world." In a word, the agreement must be taken, all or none: you cannot suppose yourself at liberty to choose which part you will keep, and which not; you cannot expect the privileges of God's household, if you will not try to perform your part of its duties.

If all this be clear on considering the first sacrament, by which our SAVIOUR admitted us into His family, it is still plainer, when we pass on to the second, by which he maintains and feeds us from time to time; like a kind father providing for his children that nourishment which they most need. Immediate communion with JESUS CHRIST, His own blessed Body and Blood, is the true support and sustenance of faithful souls; and this is what no man can provide for himself; the mercy of God provides it for him in the Church, by the hands of His chosen Ministers. God requires you to come, meekly and humbly, renouncing all claims of your own; not pretending to be any thing by yourself, but resting all your hope altogether upon your being one of CHRIST's holy

household ;—a member of His Divine Body, deriving grace and merit from HIM. By the very act of coming to the Holy Communion, you renounce, before God and man, that proud unchristian notion of standing alone, being independent. You profess yourself to stand in continual need of all the means and instruments of Grace ; the prayers, the intercession, the good example, of your brethren ; all the helps which the SON of God has so graciously provided in His Church and Household.

Thus you see how the Holy Communion, the appointed sign and daily conveyance of spiritual nourishment in the Church of God—you see how this Sacrament tends to cure men of their proud imaginary freedom, and make them feel how far they depend, by CHRIST's ordinance, upon His Church. And surely, as to zeal in good works, every one who thinks at all on the subject, knows that one chief purpose of the Holy Communion was to encourage and strengthen men in *that*. On that very account it is, that so many Christian men and women shrink back from the LORD's Altar, because they know, that worthy communicants endeavour to be zealous of good works ; and to such zeal, such endeavour, they have not yet made up their minds ; they had rather try a little longer, whether they may not do well enough by refraining outwardly from gross sins, and being about as good as their neighbours. They must be plainly told, over and over, that what keeps them from being communicants now, would have kept them from being Christians at all, if they had lived in the days of the Apostles. For, as you hear, St. Paul would then have told them, that the purpose of God in calling them to be Christians was, that they might be earnest in good works—the very thing which alarms them, and which they plead for their backwardness, when they are invited to the Communion now.

For, indeed, such an assemblage of reasons for holiness of life, as that blessed Sacrament presents, cannot be found any where else. The SON of God, dying for your pardon, the SPIRIT of God coming down to be your help, your own promises, and vows, and oaths, so solemnly repeated in the more immediate presence of the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST—all this brought home to your very senses by the sight and touch of the Holy Elements, left by our SAVIOUR to be pledges of HIMSELF, to be, in effect and virtue, His own Body and Blood—must needs make

a serious impression on every heart capable of seriousness, and dispose it to serve CHRIST truly for the future ; and besides all, and to ensure all, there is the secret invisible aid of God's HOLY SPIRIT, which, dwelling without measure in the Man CHRIST JESUS, fails not to be communicated more and more to all who worthily partake of that Bread and Cup. It is, as it were, a strengthening medicine, left to CHRIST's peculiar people, the Church, in order that they may be helped more plenteously to bring forth the fruit of good works.

Are you then weak in any part of your duty? come to that holy Feast with a sincere will and desire to be stronger, and you will by degrees be strengthened. But the truth is, too many of us, well-knowing where they are spiritually feeble, do not care to be made strong and sound. They had rather, in fact, continue weak, in order to have a sort of excuse for some wrong indulgence or evil passion. They decline God's bread, from a childish notion, that so they may be excused from doing God's work.

But the ALMIGHTY will not so be mocked, nor so permit His own peculiar people to make void His purpose in purifying them to HIMSELF. And lest the two Sacraments alope should fail in reminding them of that purpose, HE has also condescended, as a careful Master, to appoint persons under HIM in His household ; ministers of His holy Word and Sacraments, having power and commandment from HIM, on the one hand, to remind obstinate sinners that such and such things *are* sins, and that GOD has passed sentence on them in Heaven ; on the other, to declare and pronounce to the penitent the absolution and remission of all their sins. The Apostles had, united to this, power to strike certain great and open sinners with sickness or other temporal punishment—to deliver them for a while to an evil spirit for the hurt of the flesh, that the soul might be saved in the day of the LORD Jesus. And both the Apostles, and their successors the Bishops, used to turn men out of the Church, when their offences were notorious and open, shutting them, by public sentence, out of the solemn assemblies of Christians, from hearing God's word, praying with their brethren, and especially from receiving CHRIST's sacred Body and Blood. This is called by our Church, in the Communion Service, “a godly discipline,” and she greatly wishes it might be restored among us ; which happy return to the

practice of the better times we may (if ever) *then* hope to see, when Christians in general shall have learned more humility and modesty, and be willing to trust themselves to the Church of CHRIST, instead of presumptuously seeking out each his own way of salvation.

I say, when men are spiritually more humble, we may hope to see "godly discipline" revived, sinners turned out of the Church, and openly humbling themselves before GOD: but until then we must wait with patience. This use, at any rate, we may make of what we read in the Scriptures concerning the discipline of the early Church; it may serve as one instance more of the stress laid on good works by HIM who enacted those laws for His people, our LORD and SAVIOUR CHRIST HIMSELF. HE it was who declared to His Apostles, and through them to all Bishops of His Flock, "Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted, and whose sins ye retain, they are retained:" and His SPIRIT instructed them to use that power in excluding great and open sinners from the Church. Could there be a clearer sign of the will and desire of CHRIST our King to have His Church without spot or blemish, "plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works?" And since HE is still the same CHRIST, ruling in His household by the same SPIRIT, although unhappily the same outward discipline cannot at once be revived among us, still those who wish always to please their LORD, may do well to bear that discipline in mind, and order some parts of their conduct by it.

For example: one rule of that ancient discipline was, "If any man that is called a Christian be a fornicator, or a defrauder, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat;" to avoid his company, and show him that you did so, on indifferent and ordinary occasions. Would it not be true Christian charity, if some of us would act on this rule a little more conscientiously than the world would teach us to do; treating those persons, who are notoriously guilty of what GOD has condemned, however usual—treating them, I say, with a kind of reserve, as though they were already excommunicated; as, no doubt, they are in Heaven? I say, this would be the truest charity, because it would give these unfortunate persons one chance more of repentance and amendment, as often as they saw Christian people, otherwise kind and gentle,

shrinking from them on account of their sins. Whereas, if, amid all their notorious guilt, they find themselves yet welcome companions even to such as profess to fear God, what can they possibly imagine but this, That good men, in their hearts, do not believe *all* that is said of the terrible consequences of such sins? And what effect can that have, but to embolden the sinner in his desperate course, and cause him, contrary to all our prayers, and contrary to all the will of our REDEEMER, plenteously to bring forth the fruit of *evil* works?

Even out of charity, therefore, to the sinner, Christians are bound in their ordinary dealings to mark and avoid profligate men; and if they would do so, not in party spirit, but thoughtfully and seriously, for conscience sake, they would be so far forwarding, each in his place, the purpose of their SAVIOUR in giving HIMSELF for them. They would be doing what little they can towards purifying the Church of God, and making it zealous of good works.

Only let it always be remembered, that little blessing can be expected on this or any other effort, which any man may make for the salvation of others, except he watch, in the first place, for his own. There let your Christian zeal begin, in rooting out bad habits, and quieting rude and violent passions; let that work go hand in hand with a charitable zeal to make other men better also, and both, by God's blessing, will be well done. A mind so disposed will go on, silently and gradually, from year to year, bringing forth the fruit of good works, till, in His own good time, HE who inspired will plenteously reward it.

SERMON CXCIX.

ACCOUNT TO BE GIVEN OF CHURCH PRIVILEGES.

FOR THE SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT.

JOHN xv. 22.

“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.”

WE are so used to have the means of grace continually (as we think) within our reach, that most of us, I fear, have come to consider them quite as a settled thing, a matter of course. It does not come into our minds, that we owe any particular thanks to the ALMIGHTY for casting our lot where we may have so rich blessings from the Gospel and Church of CHRIST; for giving us, not only the Bible, but the Prayer-Book too. We seldom or never recollect and examine ourselves, whether we be not loading ourselves with a heavy burthen against the last Day, every year, month, and week of our lives, by the little use we make of the Prayer-Book in particular.

In order to help Christian men in understanding their own guiltiness in this respect, Scripture has been very full in setting forth the inexcusable guilt of those Jews who lived when our SAVIOUR came, and threw away that great privilege of having HIM personally among them. Let us suppose any one of these, the year before our LORD's ministrations began: suppose a man in those times, living in the same careless way that the generality of people in all times seem to prefer, not indeed rejecting his

CREATOR altogether, but paying him very slight attention, praying seldom and very carelessly, and taking no pains to pray better; indulging and humouring himself daily, with little thought of another world, little restraint from the known will of God. And suppose that some devout person, coming to such an earthly-minded Jew, in order to advise him better, had been enabled to tell him beforehand of the wonderful manifestation, which God was preparing to make of His eternal judgment and mercy, by His SON JESUS CHRIST; suppose it had been said, "You are now at ease in your sins, but what will be your thoughts when the MOST HIGH God shall begin to do wondrously in your sight; when a Divine Instructor shall appear, and raise the dead, and open the eyes of the blind, and feed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, and show by all the other miracles of which the old prophets have spoken, that HE is indeed the promised SON of God? Shall you be able to keep up your profane indifference, when HE tells you of another world, and when HE proves His words true by calling the dead out of their graves?"

Suppose these questions put to a careless irreligious Israelite, there can be no doubt what his answer would have been. He would have said, "Show me such signs as those, and of course I must and shall be convinced." But when the signs were really wrought, what was their effect on the generality? We know too certainly that they did not and would not believe: they listened eagerly to the crafty inventions of their Scribes and Pharisees. Instead of repenting, they cried out, "Crucify HIM." So unlike was their conduct to what themselves would have expected beforehand. CHRIST came and spake unto them, HE showed them the signs themselves demanded, and so left them without any cloke for their sin.

By this we see, when people have gone on long in forgetfulness of God, how very much worse they become than they know themselves. They bring themselves to such a habit of unbelief, that miracles, doctrine, every thing, is lost upon them. Those very means of grace, which they would have thought themselves beforehand sure to be converted by, fail to do them any good.

Let us take another example, nearer to our own experience. Suppose any thoughtful person, who had been all his life long

kept at a distance from Christian privileges and means of grace, to be somehow or other made acquainted with the provision made in this country, for bringing men to repentance and salvation. Suppose him informed for the first time, that if he would come and live among us, he would find such places as our churches provided, such services as those in our Prayer-Book appointed, and such an order of persons as our Bishops and Pastors ordained, on purpose to keep up a continual communication between repenting sinners and their pardoning God: what would he expect to find, when he came to live in a land so favoured? Would he not say to himself, "Surely among this people I may hope to find the words of the prophet accomplished, by whom God, speaking of the glorified Church, says, 'My people shall be all righteous?'" If any person, naturally, would look beforehand for some such thorough reformation among men so privileged as we are, then we may judge of our own degeneracy and wickedness, whose conduct is so very far from coming up to such expectations.

To put the case still more particularly: Imagine for a moment that the Order of Common Prayer and Sacraments, such as we have it in our Prayer-Book, had only just been contrived and adopted by the Church: that we had gone on hitherto without any such help, every man being left to make out the Scriptures by himself, and serve God as he might judge best. Imagine that the order of the Sunday Services, such as will begin afresh next Sunday, and go round to Advent in next year, were now to be tried for the first time: I think one may say, quite positively, that any serious sensible person, who should look through the services prepared, would naturally look for a great improvement, a material amendment in the hearts and lives of Christians, by the time these services should have been gone through one or two years.

For, first of all, on opening the Prayer-Book, he would see that a daily Service was provided: an Order for Morning and Evening Prayers, not for Sundays and great days only, but for every day throughout the year. Here then, he would say, is a Church and Nation, in which that common error will be cured, of considering religion, and the worship of God, as a duty for Sundays only. Here we may expect to find people

honouring the Sunday indeed beyond all days, and keeping it, by a holy rest, as the appointed feast of our LORD'S Resurrection, but yet not forgetful of God and His Church on other days,—a people ready to own and remember, that however important and pressing their week-day cares and duties may be, they cannot be so important and pressing as to justify them in neglecting their God: who therefore will earnestly endeavour to serve God in His Church, not on Sundays only, but as often as ever that Church is open: will wish and try to be there, and be sorry when they cannot.

This, I say, is one of the not unreasonable expectations which might enter into a thoughtful stranger's mind, on reading our Prayer-Book over for the first time. How would he be surprised and disappointed, when he came to know the real state of the case! when he found that in a country so highly favoured, such was the general lukewarmness and irreligion, that the Churches in most places were only open on Sundays, and then very partially attended,—attended in such a way, as too plainly shows that men think more of entertaining themselves, by hearing some new word of man, than of strengthening and refreshing their souls, by joining in the Church's prayer to her God!

In the same way, each part of the Prayer-Book, compared with the lives of those who use it, or might use it, would seem to bring a grievous accusation against them. Look at our Confession of Sins, renewed every morning and evening. Will it not stand as against us in God's Book, that with such a remembrancer continually sounding in our ears, we should yet have so little thought of our lost and miserable condition by sin, so little care to secure God's pardon by a godly, righteous, and sober life? Look again at the Absolution: can any man say that he wants encouragement to draw near his SAVIOUR in humble penitence, when he hears, or may hear, so very often those gracious words, "HE pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel?" Look at the prayers, consider them fairly, and judge whether those persons *can* be excusable who, being taught by God's own Apostolical Church such pure and heavenly and devout ways of addressing HIM, still continue at a distance from HIM.

Look at the glorious Psalms and Hymns, using which we

praise GOD often in the very words of the HOLY GHOST, always in the words of the saints and martyrs of old. Whose fault must it be, if in the congregation where such anthems are heard, worldly, discontented imaginations still prevail? Who is to blame, but your own wilful spirit, if when you might have formed yourself to a holy resignation and thankfulness by constant using of the Psalms of David, the man after God's own heart, you still remain a fretful, moody complainer?

Look at the Creeds of the Holy Catholic Church, and be sure that she is not to blame, if her children, having such guidance from her, go seriously wrong in the interpretation of holy Scripture. Look at the order taken for Instruction in God's Word: no person allowed to preach, or to perform any other holy office, without the warrant of our LORD JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF, conveyed to the Minister, by the laying on of the hands of the Bishops, the successors of His Apostles: holy Lessons regularly taken out of the Old Testament and out of the New, till the whole counsel of GOD has been declared in the words of His own DIVINE SPIRIT: the Sermon itself, in our Church, for more solemnity, made a part of the Communion Service, and every thing about it so ordered as to show the wish of the Church, that it should not be like a bare word from man, but rather, as it were, the unfolding of God's word by His own undoubted warrant and authority.

Again, suppose any rightly thinking person to have been living where the holy Sacraments of CHRIST, Baptism and the Supper of the LORD, were slighted and made little of, would he not accept the Services in our Prayer-Book as a great security provided by the Church against such a dangerous and profane error? When he found what care is taken to have young children brought to their SAVIOUR, without any loss of time—to leave them, being so brought, in no doubt of their Christian privileges—to furnish them with full instruction in their duty, and sureties to see that they learn it all—to bring them in due time before the Bishop, that by laying on of his hands they may receive more and more of God's HOLY SPIRIT: when a man came for the first time to know of all these charitable precautions, used by the Church to bring all her children to³ Heaven, he would surely expect to find children brought to baptism with a deep and devout sense of the

inestimable blessing there prepared for them ; taught their Catechism, not as a mere school-task, but as a part of the solemn service of God, not only to be repeated, but to be practised : anxious to be confirmed, and diligent in preparing themselves for it. All this one might hope to see not in five or six only, such as one may look for even in a heathen country where the Gospel is preached at all, but in the general body of the congregation.

When he came to find it otherwise—when he came to know of Baptism being slighted by many, as though it were no great spiritual good—of godfathers looking on their duty as a mere compliment, or matter of course—of people's making haste to forget their Catechism, and caring very little for Confirmation : when he came to know of these things, he would, I should expect, say to himself, “ Wherever the fault of all this lies, the Church, at least, is not to blame for it : *she* has done her duty. It may be her ministers' neglect, or it may be her people's stubbornness, or it may be some of the one and some of the other : but the Church herself is free of all blame : and a heavy account they will have to give, who live in hearing of her plain grave instructions, and behave as if she had never spoken a word to them.”

The same, again, would be his course of thought, when he came to consider the other blessed Sacrament, and to compare Church laws and Church services regarding it with the ordinary behaviour of Churchmen. If any go on profanely rejecting the holy Communion altogether, the Church, he would perceive, is not to blame for it, who has not only enjoined all her children to communicate at least three times a year, but also encourages, wherever it may be, Communion on every LORD'S Day ; and to put us in mind of that sacred duty, appoints certain portions of the holy Service to be said at the LORD'S Table, even when the Sacrament is not administered.

If any come to that awful Table with hearts unclean and unprepared, it is not for want of being warned by the Church what extreme peril they run into thereby. If any come with less reverence than they ought, accounting that holy Feast a mere remembrance of our LORD'S sufferings, and not the very partaking, spiritually, of His Body and Blood offered for us, the Church in her whole service corrects his error, teaching over and over

that we there receive verily and indeed the Body and Blood of CHRIST.

And so in all other the most material points of faith and practice. Any one who should consider them one by one, first in the Prayer-Book and afterwards in the practice of Christians, must needs confess that what is corrupt among us is our own fault, and not the fault of our Church.

And when we find such wholesome laws, such sacred and heavenly services neglected, what must we naturally look for in the other parts of the same person's life and conduct? Surely we must make up our minds to see great want of seriousness and devotion, great neglect of eternal things; irregularity in every kind of duty; much dissolute and covetous conduct; discontent, murmuring, disloyalty of every kind; contempt of parents, disobedience to magistrates, irreverence to pastors, presumption towards GOD HIMSELF. And what must we expect in the end thereof? What sort of a countenance, think you, shall we appear with at the last day, when the Great KING will come to demand an account of all our talents, and especially of these, our Church privileges? how, I say, shall we look upon HIM, who have for this and so many past years possessed in such abundance the means of grace, and have turned them into means of sin? The JUDGE HIMSELF has given us some insight into the proceedings of that fearful day, so far as regards impenitent and slothful Christians. "Many will come to me in that day, saying, We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and THOU hast taught in our streets: and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from ME, ye that work iniquity." Alas! if any persons in the world stand in danger of this sentence, surely it is they who live among the Church services, and yet continue profane and indevout, and go on in the ordinary way of the world.

If there be any such here—any whose conscience charges him with being no truer a penitent, no nearer his GOD now than he was a twelvemonth ago, when we last finished the course of Sunday Services, and turned back to Advent again—as he cannot but feel in his heart that the blame rests not with the Church, but with himself, so he may understand that the remedy also, by God's grace, depends on himself, and it is not too late. The

ALMIGHTY, by sparing you to another Advent, gives you clearly and distinctly to know, that HE will yet accept and pardon you, if you will yet turn to HIM, and begin at last to make the right use of these inestimable privileges. HE will presently begin to warn you again, by the course of Sunday Lessons and Collects, of His speedy coming in His glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and the dead. HE will then assure you, week after week, of His SON's unspeakable condescension in taking our nature upon HIM, and doing and suffering all for us, even to the death of the Cross. By the Easter and Whitsuntide Services, HE will afterwards teach you how to glorify HIM who died for you, and now reigns over you; and how to submit yourselves to His gracious SPIRIT, come down in His absence to bring you nearer and nearer to HIM. Then by the course of the Services after Trinity Sunday, even to this time next year (should it please HIM that any of us live so long), HE will instruct you what fruit of good works HE expects of those who have been so highly favoured. It rests with yourselves, my Christian brethren, to resolve whether this course of divine instruction shall pass away unimproved by you, and you remain as barren as in other seasons, or no. But be assured of this, that you cannot remain where you are. Every day that you do not mend, with such helps to amendment offered you, in the sight of God you become worse.

Above all, beware of neglecting these blessings out of the foolish and profane notion (the ruin, alas! of too many) that they are always within your reach, that you may avail yourselves of them to repent when you will. You cannot insure your life nor your reason for one hour; how then can you reckon on any future repentance? The great Advent is coming on: your time is short, your work exceeding hard; a day lost, may be the loss of Eternity. One way only is safe: "Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation."

S E R M O N C C .

CHRISTIAN ENERGY.

1 COR. xvi. 13.

“ Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”

THESE words are addressed to Christians, as the soldiers of JESUS CHRIST. They are such as one might imagine a wise commander speaking to his men on the night before a battle, that they might rise up in the morning full of considerate courage, and steadily resolved to do all their duty, cost what it might. “ Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”

Every one must feel, on merely reading or hearing this, how truly great and noble the character is which St. Paul here recommends us to imitate ; how a person, who should diligently practise this rule, would, as it were, walk on high, and though he lived in the world, would be above the reach of its storms and temptations.

And we shall feel this yet more strongly, when we recollect, besides, what sort of a person it was who wrote these words, and how completely all his life was spent, after he became a Christian, in practising the lesson they teach. It was the Apostle St. Paul ; of whom it might be said, more truly perhaps than of any other Saint either in the Old or New Testament, that his whole life, after God had once called him, was a life of continual watchfulness. He never seems to have forgotten, for

a moment, that he was a Christian. Whatever he did and suffered, was done and suffered quite in a different way, and with a different mind, from what it would have been if he had not been a disciple of JESUS CHRIST. When any thing happened to him, whether pleasant or unpleasant, the first question in his mind seems always to have been, not "how can I make this turn to my own profit, or my own enjoyment?" but "how must I act, to make the most of it for the glory of my MASTER and SAVIOUR, and the good of the souls committed to my charge?" You cannot doubt, upon a little consideration, that such a man had found out the true secret of happiness, as far as it is to be had in this life.

Now then, if there be any truth in the Bible, it is in the power of every one of us, to be this great and noble character; to be like St. Paul, if he will. His example is not set before us merely like a beautiful picture, for us to look at and admire, and wish we were like it. But it is the very pattern which our Blessed LORD has set before us, to help us in copying His own divine example. We are to be followers of HIM, as he was of CHRIST.

This is not the less true, because the generality of Christian people seem to think so little of it. The world, they seem to take it for granted, is so altered since St. Paul's time, that the rules by which he conducted himself will no more do for us. We praise and admire him, but excuse ourselves, though we follow examples and indulge desires most completely opposite to his.

He tells us, for example, that it made little difference to him whether he was rich or poor. "I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound. I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." How many of us have heard and read these words over and over again, and have admired St. Paul, and praised him, for the temper of mind he shows in them, without a single thought of practising the same; without once considering, that if St. Paul was thus careless about money, it little becomes them to be so anxious about it, as they allow themselves to be every day, and all day long!

It is indeed a shameful and painful recollection, how continually we live in the midst of noble and good examples, yet how little we profit by them. Our only comfort should be, that it is not yet, by God's mercy, too late to amend. We may this

very day, if we will, begin accustoming ourselves, from time to time, to remember in our daily doings the high thoughts and rules of conduct which we read of in the Bible.

We have all of us, I suppose, at times, had pious thoughts and good resolutions in our minds. We have wished to serve God as faithfully as St. Paul: to be as contented and cheerful as he was, and to care as little for the world. Perhaps we have even tried, for a time, to live in earnest by his rule: to make the most of ourselves, and all that we had, for the honour and service of our God. Although we are too soon tired of such steady and devout purposes, yet if we have ever fairly tried, I am sure we must feel and own, that we were never so happy as in those hours. We may have been more gay and mirthful, but we were never so happy; for we never were, we never could be, so sure that God approved of our enjoyments, and that they would not leave a sting behind them when they were gone.

What hinders us from recalling those happy hours? from lengthening them to days and weeks and months and years? from keeping them by us all our lives long, to store us with pleasant recollections for ever and ever? It is only making up our minds to live steadily by faith in things not seen; to deny our wandering thoughts resolutely and manfully; and our happiness is in our power. We may, by God's grace and mercy, begin it any hour, any minute, we choose.

Any hour, any minute, we may begin "watching ourselves," considering our own words, purposes, and actions, like men who are awake and alive to what is passing around them; who know they cannot stay where they are, and are desirous to make sure of going the right way.

I do not say that this will be altogether pleasant, or, for a long time, easy. Most men have lived, hitherto, so much at random, that it must cost them some trouble to rouse themselves, and reflect in earnest on what they are doing, and where their journey will end. They are like persons only half awake, who can hardly, for a while, be brought to attend even to their most necessary cares and employments. But to go on thus in spite of warning, is indeed both childish and unchristian. It is childish carelessness of what ought to be dearest to them—the happy place which God offers them in Heaven, and which they are throwing

away for want of firmness in keeping their attention that way. It is most unchristian ingratitude for the great mercies which ALMIGHTY GOD has bestowed on them, not so much as to cast an eye towards the crown of glory which HE holds out, promising HIMSELF to be "our shield, and our exceeding great reward."

But, it will be fancied, "This rule is too hard and strict for every-day life. It will take away all the pleasant freedom of thought, and happy carelessness, which made our childish days so delightful. Surely, if we mean no *harm*, we may enjoy ourselves without the trouble of considering whether we actually mean *well* or no."

So it may seem beforehand. But if you would give God's command a fair trial, you would find it very far otherwise. The watchfulness and wakefulness which HE enjoins, does not mean that you should be always in a state of painful alarm. At first, of course, it must be an effort, but the longer and more regularly you go on with it, the easier and more natural will you find it. HE will help you to the habit of watching yourself, and restraining your inclinations, more and more entirely: as a good rider restrains an unruly horse that he is used to.

One reason why watching and controlling one's self seems to most men a hard and painful task is, the irregular and unsteady way in which it is too commonly practised. Those who have long done it most effectually, are least seen to do it: their goodness sits easy upon them. But those who do it only now and then, and then suffer themselves to fall into their former carelessness, are of course discontented and uncomfortable in themselves, and can afford but little temptation to others to follow their example. The way for them to mend themselves, and to do good to their neighbours, is to follow the second part of this apostolical advice, and not only to watch themselves continually, to be always awake to their duty, but also "to stand fast in the faith, to quit them like men, and be strong." In other words, not only to *think* of their duty, but to *do* it without delay, as soon as ever it is made known to them what God would have them to do.

"I made haste," says the Psalmist, "and prolonged not the time, to keep thy commandments." This is the only secret for being watchful and comfortable at once. Once make up your mind never to stand waiting and hesitating when your conscience

tells you what you ought to do, and you have got the key to every blessing that a sinner can reasonably hope for. Then you may, by God's blessing, experience even in this world how true those promises are, which are scattered up and down the Scriptures, of the happy effects of Christian obedience; such, for instance, as the following verses of the Proverbs of Solomon: "My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: so shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. Be not afraid of sudden fear, nor of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken."

This delightful sense of God's presence and guardian care, which in the common course of things accompanies our sincere and steady endeavours to please HIM, is surely enough, being remembered, to overpower that common objection to Christian obedience, that it brings with it a constant strain and weariness, turning our thoughts at all times exactly the same way; so that it is supposed impossible, but that one should get more and more tired of it. It cannot be altogether denied, that we must expect to meet with something of weariness and painfulness, even in the course of Christian love and duty. It is the condition of human life; a part of the cross appointed for us to bear in imitation of JESUS CHRIST. It is in vain to think of escaping it, and happy he who bears it best. But then it is equally plain, that when once the fresh spirits of early youth are past, there is the same weariness and painfulness to be looked for in every other service, as well as in God's. All men have their dull and irksome hours to endure: only he who stands fast in the faith, finds them pass more lightly over him than others, so far as he is more deeply impressed with the remembrance of the presence of his MAKER, and the hope of eternal life.

Neither can a man have any idea, before he has tried, of the constant variety which may be found, even in the soberest exercise of our duty to God and man, in the quietest walks of life. Suppose, for instance, a man only bound himself to recollect, in all his dealings with others, that plain and easy rule,

which every child is acquainted with : “ Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.” No two persons that we meet with being exactly like one another, it is evident our conduct to each would be different ; and here would be one continual exercise of our Christian wisdom—to consider how we might best suit the reasonable wishes of each out of so many various persons, some more and some less near to us. Still further ; scarce any person could be found, whose condition and circumstances are exactly the same for two days together ; so that here, too, will be continual employment for our discretion and Christian charity, in changing the manner of our kindness according to the change of their wishes and necessities. It is easy then to see, that we need not be afraid of want of variety, in the happy art of keeping God’s commandments. Once set your heart upon that task, and you will not long complain of its being dull and wearisome, or of its keeping you too much under restraint, and checking the natural spring and freedom of our affections.

Christian watchfulness, then, and standing fast in the faith, would effectually overcome those inward feelings, which stand most in the way of our perfection and happiness. Join to them Christian courage, which is the virtue next recommended by St. Paul,—“ Quit you like men, be strong,”—and you will be equally armed against the worst of those outward difficulties, which are sure, from time to time, to embarrass and distress you. You will not be moved by foolish objections, or apprehensions merely relating to this world, from doing your very best for yourself and others. “ What will people say or think of me ? how will they bear to have such and such things said and done, so different from what they are accustomed to say and do ? ”—these are questions very proper to be asked and considered, when we are considering how we may employ what God has given us to the best purposes. But they are not considerations which ought to frighten or stop us, when we are once convinced that saying or doing so and so is on higher accounts our duty. We may safely follow St. Peter’s example, and make appeal, on such points as these, to the common sense of the world itself. “ Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.” If we show ourselves steady

and resolute in the sober discharge of our duty, we shall find ourselves not only more comfortable within, but more quiet also from without; less disturbed by other people, than if we were unsteady in our good meanings, and only went half way in religion. "Let men alone, and they will let you alone," was a wise and kind warning; to all those, especially (and they are not a few), who are apt to look anxiously around, and watch what their neighbours are thinking of them.

It may sometimes happen, that though a man is certain by God's word what it is his duty to do, he shall find himself puzzled and embarrassed by the difficulties and objections of other men, not because he fears they may be true, but because he cannot find proper words, or distinct thoughts, to answer and silence them with. Something of this sort appears to have befallen the prophet Jeremiah, when "the word of the LORD was made unto him a reproach and a derision daily." He said to himself, "I will not make mention of HIM, nor speak any more in His Name." There was the temptation; but the sense of duty, duty which had become natural to him by long practice, very soon prevailed against it. "His word," says he, "was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." A resolute, practical sense of duty is the one thing needful in such a case. It is not possible, perhaps, to help being annoyed, if you find men disliking or mocking you, either for doing your duty, or for some indifferent trifle in the manner of your doing it. But it is very possible, and the only safe and comfortable way, to apply yourself to the same duty the more diligently for all their scorn and dislike: and to many people it is surely rather an advantage than not, to have little power of *talking* well on serious subjects. If they had that power, it is but too likely they would content themselves with merely talking. This ought to satisfy them and make them thankful in their want of it; only taking care to glorify God the more constantly by their lives, the less they are able to glorify HIM with their lips.

It seems, then, there is no danger, either from within or from without, which we may not overcome, if we will, by Christian watchfulness, perseverance, and courage. For if ridicule and mockery can be so overcome, we may be sure every thing else

may. And all the excuses which we daily hear in the mouths of others, and perhaps still oftener make to ourselves, of the world being too hard for us, though we wish to keep the commandments,—come in the end to no better than this: That we should be very well content to serve God, if it cost us little or nothing. If you would not die in such a temper as this towards your FATHER and your SAVIOUR, there is but one thing for you to do. Though that which makes you sin be your right eye—the thing you are most used to and love best in this world—you must pluck it out and cast it from you: “For it is better for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”

S E R M O N C C I .

THE BOOKS OPENED¹.

REV. XX. 12.

“ I saw the dead, small and great, stand before GOD ; and the books were opened : and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life : and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

THIS is that awful scene to which all things here are silently going on. Days, and months, and years, and generations, and ages, pass away, and still it comes nearer and nearer : every night that we lie down in our beds, and every morning that we rise up, is a kind of step in that unceasing journey, whether we mark it or no : it is so much irrecoverably gone of the time and power we had to prepare us for that fearful meeting with our JUDGE. St. John saw it but in vision, but that vision was an earnest and sure token of what both he and we shall one day see with our eyes. We shall see it as surely and more clearly than we now see any thing here : the bright and glorious Throne, and CHRIST sitting upon it ; the SON of GOD, who is also SON of Man, with that glorious Body which rose from the dead, and which His Disciples then saw and touched ; the Dead, of all times and nations, great and small, good and evil, believers and unbelievers, standing before HIM ; they who hid, as it were, their faces from

¹ Preached shortly before a Confirmation.

HIM, when seen on earth, or from the Church with which HE promises to be,—they shall see HIM face to face, and shall look on HIM whom they have pierced. We shall see HIM, and we shall feel that HE is looking on us; and it will make all the difference to us for ever, whether His eyes shall then be turned towards us in wrath or in mercy.

All that GOD does with us here, and all that HE calls on us to do for ourselves,—our Baptism, our Confirmation, our Prayers and Sacraments, our Churches and Holydays, our Bishops and Priests, and all our means of grace, the Word of GOD also in His Holy Scriptures,—all were given us for this one purpose, to make us ready for that last great unknown hour. If we would follow the guidance of the Bible, especially of our LORD's own words in the New Testament, we shall never allow the thought of that day to be long out of our minds. We shall think of it in the morning when we arise, and in the evening when we lie down, and in the day when we are at our work, and in the night as we lie awake on our beds. We shall be glad or sorry, pleased or troubled, as our conscience tells us that we are, or are not, going on in a way to prepare us for that day.

And to help us in this continual recollection of the end, we shall do well to represent to ourselves those most awful pictures of the Day of Judgment, of which there are so many in the Holy Scriptures. We know what sort of thing a judgment is here on earth: let us imagine something of the same kind, but infinitely awful and overpowering, at the last day: the Judgment-seat, not on earth, but in the clouds of Heaven; and sitting upon it no earthly judge, but our LORD JESUS CHRIST in His glorious Body, wherewith HE rose from the dead; around HIM no mortal guards and officers, but the Holy Angels by thousands and tens of thousands; before HIM not one or two criminals charged with one or two offences, more or less grave, but the Dead, small and great, and all those also, who shall be found alive on the earth in that generation; not that kind of stir around HIM, which takes place in a city or town on the arrival of an earthly judge, but the very Heaven that we see, and the earth that we live on, flying away before His face, so that no place shall be found for them; the world and all things therein burned up. We shall be there, my Christian brethren, every one of us,

as surely as now we are here: our eyes and ears will be witnesses of those terrible sights and sounds, beyond what now our hearts can imagine.

And now take notice of what follows next. As in earthly trials one most necessary part is the opening and reading of the written testimonies, so in this last and most dreadful trial both St. John and Daniel saw "the Books opened," that is, the records which ALMIGHTY GOD keeps, out of which we are to be judged. For as HE, our MAKER and PRESERVER, we are sure, knows all that we say, do, or think; it is all present always to HIM, HE cannot, as we do, forget it after a time;—so the Scriptures plainly teach, that what God alone now knows concerning us, HE will then declare to all the world. HE "will make manifest the counsels of men's hearts." "HE will bring to light the hidden things of darkness;" His fire will "try our work, of what sort it is."

More particularly we are instructed, that in this Book of God are "written, day by day, all our members;" all the limbs of our body, and powers of our soul, and, no doubt, all the other good gifts and talents which HE has intrusted us with. HE keeps account of all, and will call us to account for all.

Again, in this Book are entered both the insults of His open enemies, and the hypocritical unfaithful doings of His own people. As to His enemies, "Their wine," HE says, "is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps: is not this laid up in store with ME, and sealed up among My treasures? To ME belongeth vengeance and recompense:" that is, whoever speaks against God and His Church, openly taking the side of the world and the devil, he will find hereafter that all his words were treasured up. And so, too, with the hypocritical and untrue among God's own people. Of such God says by the Prophet Isaiah, "It is written before ME, I will recompense, even recompense into their bosom, your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the LORD." And Jeremiah, speaking to all those who plunge themselves wilfully in deadly sin after they have been once received among God's own people, says; "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before ME, saith the LORD GOD." And in another place, "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a

diamond." As if, though ALMIGHTY GOD keeps indeed a record for all sins, HE set down in darker letters than usual the backslidings of His own people.

Just as in other places we are given to understand, that in His mercy HE keeps a special account of those who are faithful and true to HIM in bad times. When the proud are called happy, and they that work wickedness are set up, "then they that fear the LORD speak often one to another, and the LORD hearkens and hears them, and a book of remembrance is written before HIM for them that fear the LORD and think upon His Name." HE "tells their flittings," their anxieties and trembling care: "HE puts their tears into His bottle:" "these things," especially, "are noted in His Book."

Once more: among the matters which are more particularly recorded in that fearful Book of Account, we cannot doubt that the vows are set down, which we make from time to time, either in general to serve the LORD, or to discharge our duty in any particular calling or station. No question, for example, but our baptismal vows are there, as well as the manner in which we have kept them. Not one of all the millions of souls, who have been made Members of CHRIST, since the HOLY GHOST first set up the Kingdom of Heaven in the world, is left out in that unerring Register: both the debt is there, and also how we have paid it.

No doubt also that the same leaves contain our repetition and renewal of those our first vows, whether in Confirmation or in the Holy Communion. When, as we expect in the course of a few days, those young persons who have been invited, and are prepared, come before the Bishop to receive CHRIST's blessing through him, and are asked, "Do you here in GOD's and His Church's Presence, renew solemnly your baptismal promise and vow?" and when they shall answer, as the Church bids them, "I do;" we are to make no question but that this their answer is heard in Heaven, is set down there, is registered either against or for them, will be remembered there, will appear and be recited on their trial in the great day.

So too, as often as we come to the Holy Communion, we renew our vows, we pledge ourselves to lead a new life: and every one of those promises, too, make sure of it, is written and engraven on the leaves of that awful Book. So are the vows

people make in holy matrimony, engaging themselves to love and cherish one another, and the woman besides to obey her husband, and both promising entire faithfulness, and keeping themselves only to one another, so long as they both shall live. So are the Ordination vows of the Ministers of God; and the vows which kings make when they are crowned: and, in a word, all solemn engagements which we enter into, calling God's Name to witness. We shall hear of them all at the last day: they will be read out of the Book, either to our everlasting peace, or to our shame and everlasting contempt.

It concerns us, one and all, seriously to think of this, both those who are to be confirmed, that they may say their appointed words seriously in the fear of God, and those who have been confirmed, that they may not consider what they then said as having at all passed away, but may very often bethink themselves, that their promised vow stands as fresh and distinct in God's Book, as if it were made but a moment ago. They may have forgotten it, but HE has not. Let them be for ever remembering it, if it is only to put themselves to shame with the thought, how very unworthily and thoughtlessly they took, how very imperfectly they have hitherto kept, those vows. Far better, surely, to go mourning all our days with such bitter recollection of our faults, than go on quietly and easily through life, thinking of other things, and find our broken and forgotten vows set down against us in the Court of Heaven, in that hour when there will be no more forgetting, no more hiding our face away, either from ourselves or from the world, which has thought perhaps so well of us, when we so little deserved it.

But besides these books, which contain all the doings of every one of us, there is another, a more consoling part of the Apostle's vision: "Another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life." We might have supposed, that in such an account no one could at all come off clear, no one in such a trial stand upright: but by the grace and merit of our MOST HOLY SAVIOUR we see that it is not so. There is still a Book of Life, even though in those other books all secret doings and thoughts are contained; there will be still some, in all a great multitude, found not unworthy of everlasting life.

Of this Book, the lists which were kept of the children of

Israel were a kind of type or figure : and as it is mentioned in Ezekiel of certain false Prophets, who tried to deceive God's people during the captivity, that they should "not be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither should they enter into the land of Israel ;" so we read of the heavenly Jerusalem, "There shall in no wise enter into her any thing that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie : but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

Now it appears from some Scriptures, that our names are enrolled in this happy and glorious Book, when we are made God's own ; when we are joined as true members to JESUS CHRIST, and in virtue of that heavenly union are admitted among His chosen, His Elect People. For the expression, "having your name in the Book of Life," is used more than once by our LORD and His Apostles, as if it meant "being a Christian ;" "admitted to Church Privileges, and not having forfeited them." Thus St. Paul speaks of certain "women which had laboured with him in the Gospel, with Clément also, and with other his fellow-labourers, whose names are in the Book of Life." Did the Apostle mean to say, that those of whom he was speaking were all sure, even while they stayed here, of eternal salvation ? Such is not the way of Holy Scripture ; it is not accustomed to speak so positively of the living. It is much more according to the general course and tenour of the Bible, and surely it were grace and glory unspeakable for any man, if we suppose these words to contain an assurance from the HOLY GHOST, that St. Clement and the rest were *then* such as HE delights to honour ; such that their place in the Book of Life was not *at that time* at all doubtful.

Thus also our LORD, in two several places ; first, when the Seventy returned with joy from the circuit on which HE sent them, pleased to think, that even the Devils were subject to them through CHRIST's name, HE bade them not so much rejoice in this, "that the spirits were subject unto them," but "rather to rejoice, because their names were written in Heaven." The ground of their hope and joy was to be, not so much their extraordinary gifts, as the ordinary privileges of a Christian, which they were to enjoy in common with all members of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The other place in which our LORD mentions the Book of Life

is in one of His letters to the Churches of Asia, in the Revelation. "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot his Name out of the Book of Life, but will profess it before MY FATHER and before His Angels." By this verse it would seem, that a person's name may be blotted out of the Book of Life after it is once in that Book: and 'it is plain, from God's own word to Moses, what will blot it out. Sin will do so, and nothing else. For when the people had sinned grievously, and Moses in his great love had offered to be made a kind of sacrifice for them, the LORD's own word is, "Whosoever sinneth against ME, him will I blot out of MY Book." And David, in one of his prophetic Psalms, lays this curse upon the impenitent persecutors; "Let them be wiped out of the Book of the Living, and not be written among the righteous."

Now the serious thought here, the thought which nearly concerns every one to lay deeply to heart, is this: That surely we ourselves had once our name written in Heaven; there was a time when we may be quite certain, if we will believe the Church, that our names were in the Book of Life. This we are sure of, because the Church tells us in her rubric at the end of the Baptismal Service, that "It is certain by God's word, that all baptized infants, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved." They could not be saved unless their names were in that Blessed Book; but no doubt they were enrolled there, when the children were admitted into God's kingdom by Holy Baptism: just as persons' names are entered on the books of any earthly society, when they become members of it.

Consider this thing well: whatever we are now, there surely was once a time when our names were in the Book of Life; when, if it had pleased God to take us, our eternal salvation was quite sure. If our condition be doubtful now, whose fault can it be, so much as our own? Other persons there may be within the bounds of the Christian world, who have been from their Baptism upward, outwardly, at least, without any means of grace: but which of us can say anything of the kind? Which of us can say that he really had no fair chance of knowing something of the heavenly treasure committed to him, and of preserving it, by God's grace, entire until the last day, had he only

cared as much for it, as we all naturally care for what we esteem blessings in this world?

Nay, we must be very strangely inattentive to what passes in our own minds, if we do not by our own experience acknowledge that we could have helped our wilful sins, each one of them separately, if we would. And it is our wilful sins which blot our name out of the Book of Life. In whatever degree we have committed such, just so far we have reason to fear that the letters there inscribed in remembrance of us have grown at least fainter and fainter: and if we do not immediately turn and repent, who knows how soon they may quite pass away, so that even the All-seeing Eye may discern no trace of them?

As long as we are in this world, we cannot read in this Book of Life. The ALMIGHTY, in His wisdom and mercy, keeps it a secret from us, not only whether other men's names are there, but also to what degree our own transgressions have blotted out our names. We have great reason to fear, that many persons' names are blotted out, who are far indeed from imagining any such thing. Who can tell how near he himself may have been, or worse, may even now be, to that dreadful consummation? How near the next wilful sin may bring him to it? Let us be persuaded never more to trifle, as too many of us hitherto have been doing, either with our dangers or with our blessings.

You especially, who are now to be confirmed, whose tender age gives reason to hope that your names at least are yet in the Book of Life, not blotted out by wilful and deliberate sin; make up your minds, I beseech you, while there is time, to keep them there by cheerful obedience all the days of your life. If they are not there at the last day, you know your sentence, it is too plain to be doubted: "Whosoever is not found written in the Book of Life shall be cast into the lake of fire:" "and there shall in no wise enter into the heavenly city" any wilful sinner, "but they that are written in the LAMB's Book of Life."

If our sins have made our names faint and indistinct there, there is a remedy, blessed be God: the waters of repentance and the blood of the Cross will revive them, only let them be applied speedily, and continued all the rest of our lives. But how much better to have kept them, by God's grace, what the names of Chris-

tian children we trust now are, bright and fresh ! How much better, without loss of time, to remember your CREATOR in the days of your youth : to see to it immediately, that your wedding garment, put on you at Baptism, be pure and clean, and so to come at once to the King's feast, and never forsake it !

END OF VOL. VI.











